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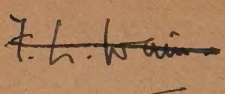

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THOUGHTS

ON THE

COLLECTS FOR THE TRINITY SEASON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE HALLOWING OF SORROW.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE

REV. H. S. HOLLAND, M.A.,

Canon and Precentor of St. Paul's.

Small 8vo. 2s.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.,

LONDON, NEW YORK AND BOMBAY.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

Collects for the Trinity Season

BY

ETHEL ROMANES

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF GEORGE JOHN ROMANES," "THE HALLOWING OF SORROW"

WITH A PREFACE

BY

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

"Deus . . . Quem nosse vivere, Cui servire regnare est!"

THIRD EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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TO

A. A. M.

Epiphany, 1899

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The idea of this little book was suggested to the Writer by a friend who had some difficulty in finding a book of very Simple Meditations for the Trinity Season which could be put into the hands of very busy people.

It is needless to point out the absence of originality. The Writer has simply tried to suggest, on the lines laid down by the Collects, thoughts which have been suggested to her by those from whom she herself has learned.

The Writer begs to thank the Committee of Hymns Ancient and Modern for kind permission to use the hymns.

PREFACE

BY THE

BISHOP OF LONDON.

We are all told to meditate. But *how* to meditate? That is the difficulty to so many, especially to those who have had little training in connected thought.

These simple meditations ought, therefore, to fill a place in the spiritual literature of the day, which needs filling. No books can, of course, take the place of the work which each soul must do for itself in feeding on God's Revelation; but such thoughts as are contained in this book may show many how to begin a habit of meditation, and may convince them that it is not such an impossible task as is often supposed.

A. F. LONDON.

London.

TO THOSE WHO USE THIS BOOK.

You will see that the Collect has been broken up into four, five, sometimes six divisions. A Thought for each division.

It is hoped that those who read this book will take one Thought each morning, and perhaps learn the text by heart.

The early morning, before one goes out to one's work, is always the best time for such reading. Some people, however, find they can read for a little while in the middle of the day, and others put it off until the evening. When this is done it would be well to read the Thought carefully over at night, and look at the text which is at the beginning again before one goes out, so that one may keep one's quiet reading stored away for use in the long day.

There are usually no Thoughts for Saturday, and very often none for Friday. One can take these days for one's preparation for Holy Communion, or for a special bit of Bible Reading, or for some other book.

It may happen, please God, that some of us who week by week study the Collects may grow to see how

full of teaching and of help they are. We may learn to *pray* them, and if we learn to pray them we shall learn to live them and to find the Joy of that Service which is perfect freedom.

The Hymns are, except where it is otherwise stated, taken from *Hymns Ancient and Modern.*

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THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping of Thy commandments we may please Thee both in will and deed, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers."

Texts.—"My brethren, be strong in the Lord" (Eph. vi. 10).

"He verily is my strength" (Ps. lxii. 2).

"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and consider my desire" (Ps. cxliii. 1).

Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Whitsuntide are over. I have been taught all the things a Christian should know and believe, and last week I was taught specially that we worship One God in Three Persons. And now for many weeks I must try to find out what this holy religion has to do with my life.

I feel, perhaps, how lovely goodness is. It has come home to me how beautiful it is to belong to Jesus, but oh, it is so hard to be good! Well, here is a bit of comfort at once.

God our strength.

A Christian must be strong, but whose strength is to be his or her support?—God's. God accepts us, accepts me, because I am in Christ, a part of Christ. Our Lord gives me Himself, nothing less than this. God the Holy Ghost has come to me, and will come again and again. If God is my Strength, I must not try to get away from Him for one moment. I must throw myself on Him.

Temptation seems so strong, but I have a strength not my own. Now, do I really believe that it is my duty to be *strong?*

How can we be strong?

People's bodies are made strong by constant exercise. A person who is continually playing cricket, or rowing, gets very strong arms.

A person who takes a great deal of exercise, walking or riding, becomes able to endure fatigue.

It may seem strange, but so it is with our souls. We must exercise our souls in goodness.

If we have a habit of continually losing our temper, and by God's strength we get into the habit of continually stopping ourselves when we are about to give way, we shall by degrees find it becomes easier and easier to choke down our anger, to check the angry words and looks. And so it is with every other kind of Christian goodness.

But the person who is using his bodily strength by rowing or walking has to take food, to rest sometimes.

And so must it be for the soul. God gives us His strength in many ways, and very certainly by these outward means.

Do I ever think of what Confirmation means—making strong? Yes, God the Holy Ghost comes to make us *strong*.

Do I ever think of the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood? There souls are fed by Heavenly Food.

Again, suppose a person who has plenty of good food and yet does not exercise his body, does not practise rowing or walking, or what not, his arms and legs grow flabby and weak. So is it with me if I do not use the strength God gives me. To make me strong against sin. The strength of Confirmation will be wasted, the Heavenly Food will do me no good, will rather hurt my soul if I do not try.

Now to-day is there any temptation to which I yield day after day?

It may be a little thing—I can't persuade myself to get up early enough to say my prayers. If I ask God rightly I shall get the better of my laziness. But there are much worse things to which these little sins, if I give way to them, lead. Do I feel greatly tempted to any great sin? God will be my strength. There is boundless help and strength ready for me if I only will ask Him.

This brings me to my second thought.

"Mercifully accept our prayers." Do I ever pray God to take my poor worthless prayers and hear them?

If only I could bring it home to myself how great a blessing prayer is I should pray much more. But to-day if there is something that tempts me to sins of temper, of infirmity, of dishonesty, of greediness, let me, on my knees, pray to God to be my strength. That word *mercifully* shows how pitiful He is. He knows, He cares for me.

"Shepherd Divine, our wants relieve
In this our evil day,
To all Thy tempted followers give
The power to watch and pray." (248.)

Thought II.

"And because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee."

Text.—"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18).

It is a great lesson for me to learn, and perhaps I shall be some time in learning it—that I am *very* weak. One looks round and sees perhaps how weak one's neighbours are, how they give way to temper, to drink, to every sort of sin, but it takes one a long time to make up one's mind that one is just the same—*weak*.

Our *mortal nature*. That is, a nature subject to death.

Our nature. Our mind and will, our body and soul.

Now, it may puzzle me, it puzzles many people, how sin got into the world, what the old story of the Fall means. But there is no doubt that the story is true, for no person who is sane can think that there is no sin in the world. The world is full of awful sin, and in every man and woman's nature there is this weakness, this sickness of the soul.

Now until I know this, I can never really pray daily, and from my heart, for help.

"Without Thee." "No good thing." Doing right comes from a heart right with God, and so without God we can do nothing.

But God takes us, takes me, if I will let Him, and bit by bit changes my weak nature into Christ's nature. He looks on me as a part of Christ, and once I have thrown myself on God, my weak nature will be made Christ's nature. For that is my hope of *immortal* life. Jesus says, "I will give unto them eternal life". This means a fresh nature, strong, pure and good, which begins here on earth.

So let me pray that bit by bit, slowly but surely, God will change my weak nature, that more and more He will teach me to lay hold on eternal life.

Now, can I make this practical for to-day?

Yes, I can put myself into God's hands. I can pray Him to give me what I need. For very likely I may be tempted to-day; it may be that in one way or another really bad temptations surround me. I may have fallen; shall I fall again?

Not if God is my strength—if I will give up all trust in myself—shall I fall again?

If things are very bad and it seems as if I must give way, let me send one prayer up to Him, "O Lord, I am weak. Thou art strong, hear my prayer, teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee."

"Still let me ever watch and pray
And feel that I am frail,
That if the tempter cross my way
Yet he may not prevail." (282.)

Thought III.

"Grant us the help of Thy grace."

Text.—"My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Perhaps now, after these thoughts of the great weakness of my mortal nature, I might be inclined to feel very sad. I know I cannot do anything without God, but can I be sure I shall have Him to help me?

And now this wonderful text comes to cheer me.

The great S. Paul felt as I do; he could *not* bear his trial, and then came this message, this "word of God" for S. Paul, for every Christian.

God actually is so good as to say He really wants our weakness to show His strength.

Just as a good doctor wants a patient to cure. So God *wants* us to take of His grace.

And what is grace? Simply His help, His favour, His gifts. "And I pray God to give me His grace."

Now, our heavenly Father does not want me or any one else to live in a state of doubt as to whether we have got grace. A child in a good home does not doubt whether he has been fed, whether he has been nursed in sickness.

And let me never forget, if I am a baptised Christian, that I am in my Father's house, and have a *right* to His gifts; if I don't ask for them, I am disobeying Him. God gives me His gifts of grace by quite simple means.

First there is my Christian life to be begun; it begins by the outward sign of Water and the Holy Words, the grace of being taken into God's family, put into the very closest relation with God.

Then, a new gift comes; when the girl or boy who was baptised as a little baby is old enough to realise its need (or immediately after the baptism of a grown person) Confirmation gives the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Then, whenever we wish, we who are Confirmed can kneel at Christ's Heavenly Feast, and eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup, and have Food for our souls.

Then God promises grace will come to us, if we pray to Him for it.

If I pray to God for grace to fight against any one particular sin, to bear one particular trouble, I may be quite sure He will give me that help. I am one of His household. He will give me my "meat in due season". And grace comes in many other ways. God is so tender, often grace will come to us through some trouble. He teaches us to bear a time of sickness, a time of bitter trial, a time

of persecution, of being laughed at, mocked, and if we have not been perfectly patient perhaps, but really trying to endure, it will be a surprise to find God has come to our souls. Sometimes a great joy leads us to Him and is a means of grace, such as a happy marriage or the great gift of a child; sometimes a nice book, a talk with a dear wise friend.

But let me never forget that the chief ways are: God's Holy Word, His Sacraments and prayer. Now if I don't use these means, and yet say I can't be good and life is too hard, I am like the person in the old story who was suddenly asked to pay a sum of money, and began to lament, and say there was no money in the house, and what *was* he to do? And his friends laughed at him, because they knew that he had "very large sums of money in the bank and yet he would not take the trouble to go there and get some money out".

Now it is not irreverent to get a real bit of teaching out of this. I have a treasury full of grace which can never, never be exhausted. Do I draw on it?

There is nothing that the grace of God cannot do for me, if I choose to use means for getting it.

Earnest prayer, reverent Communions, devout reading of God's Word, the word of Absolution from His ministers are all ways in which I can get His grace.

How silly, how ungrateful, if I do *not* use this treasury, do not come to Jesus Christ and use what He died and lives again to send me—the great gifts of grace which the Holy Spirit day by day brings to each soul in whom He dwells.

"The King of Love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine for ever.

"Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow
With food celestial feedeth.

"Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home rejoicing brought me.

"In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy Cross before to guide me.

"Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
Thy unction grace bestoweth;
And oh, what transport of delight
From thy pure chalice floweth!

"And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house for ever." Amen. (197.)

THOUGHT IV.

"That in keeping of Thy commandments."

Text.—"FOR THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS" (1 John v. 3).

God never lets us be vague about what religion is, what love of Him means. I must not think that the grace I thought of in my last meditation is meant to make me feel happy, or excited, or inclined to cry, or even to give me a desire to die and be "in Paradise," about which we often sing. (I wonder when I do sing "O Paradise, O Paradise" and "Jerusalem the Golden," if I *really* mean I want to be there?)

His grace is to make me *good*, to make me *holy*, to make me wish more and more for goodness.

And what is being good?

Again and again, I shall find texts which will teach me that being good is treading that steep narrow path of God's commandments, that narrow way which our Lord once told His disciples few find.

The commandments—yes, but for our comfort, S. John adds "His commandments are not grievous"; that is, they are not harsh, cruel, vexing laws or rules, such as laws made by men have sometimes been, but wise, tender commands which are meant to train us for God. The Ten Commandments, as our Lord explains them in His Sermon on the Mount, are what we are to keep.

This is the way I can try to test my life.

If I am trying to keep His commandments, and praying for grace to do so, I am loving God, and am treading that narrow way which so surely but slowly leads to God. And keeping the commandments, following our Lord's rules, will by degrees make me understand how true it is that the service of God is perfect freedom. For instance, if I fight against anger, against breaking the sixth commandment in any form or shape, I shall find little by little, not this year, nor the next, perhaps, but certainly by-and-by, that I am not a slave to evil tempers, that God has trained me to check each angry word, each unkind act. And it will be so with every besetting sin. By degrees the strict rule of God's commandments will make me war against each sin, and God's grace will set me free.

"Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His Face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize." (540.)

Thought V.

"We may please Thee both in will and deed."

Text.—"It is God which worketh in you both to will and do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13).

It is a wonderful thought to-day. If *I*, yes I myself, try to please God by keeping His rule, He is pleased. Pleased with me. Did I ever please some one I loved, and, if so, don't I remember the glow of delight which rushed in on me? Well, I can please God. He is so great that nothing is too small for Him, and is it not a thought to bring me to my knees in thankful prayer, that my Father, my Saviour, my Sanctifier, He Who gives me forgiveness and strength and courage is pleased because I try to use His gifts?

Next I have to remember—I am to please God in *will* and *deed*. *Will* first.

Now I have often heard of *conversion*, and without going very much into the subject of conversion I may just remember this: If my will is turned to God, if I wish to please Him, if I ask Him to forgive me every time I do wrong, and try again, then I am *converted*. My heart is right with God.

I remember S. Peter. He fell into dreadful sin, yet he was restored and forgiven—his will was right. And I have read the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They died because of their sin. Why was their sin so bad? Because their hearts were all wrong. They had no wish to *be* good, but they wished people to *think* them good. They were not "converted".

But God will give me the will, the longing to be good, to keep His commandments from my heart.

How can I do this to-day? Is there any bit of work I have to do, house work, sewing, washing, work in a factory,

work in a shop, or in teaching, or learning, or care of children?—all these can be done for Him. I may have smiled at the story of the little girl who when asked, "What difference is there in you since you were converted?" said "I always sweep *under* the mats now". But the little girl was right. S. Paul said to some Christian slaves that they were not to work only when they were seen by their masters, but as the servants of God.

So can I; it may be dreary work I have to do, but it may be done for God. Again, shall I meet some one I don't like; have I to do something for some one who is tiresome or cross?

I can feel Jesus Christ is there. It is for Him I work. Or have I to bear some pain, some sickness? I can be patient for Him, for His dear sake.

And as I go on through the long day, working or bearing, or whatever it is for Him, doing what He tells me, thinking of His commandments, I may be quite sure His smile is on me.

He said, if a cup of cold water were given for His sake, He would count it as done for Him. I need *not* be afraid He will refuse anything I do or bear for Him, even if it is taking more trouble over my work, or doing a small act of kindness, or resisting some temptation.

By degrees the wish to please God will grow and grow and grow, and He will make me know the joy of service.

"The Lord Himself hath need of us;
On! till the fight be won;
And the King's words shall thrill the heart:
'Servant of God, well done!'" (543.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O Lord, Who never failest to help and govern them whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love; keep us, we beseech Thee, under the protection of Thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, Who never failest to help and govern them whom Thou dost bring up."

Text.—"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15).

To-day I am taught what God means for His children.

He does not leave us at all to ourselves.

He brings us up.

Now, God means us to belong to Him as soon as we are born. He means us to be brought by Christians to Holy Baptism, to have the beginnings of life eternal given us, and then to be "brought up" bit by bit to know about Him.

Is that what I feel about any little children with whom I have to do? That God gives them to those who have the care of them to bring them up for Him. All who have the care of children are bound to this task, whether as father, mother, elder sister, nurse or teacher. God does not want His lambs to grow up without knowing they are His lambs, bought by His own blood, made holy by His Spirit. No, a

child should grow up, knowing from the first that it is God's little child, that He is its tender Father, Christ its Elder Brother, the Holy Spirit its guide. It should be taught loving ways, kept pure, innocent, truthful, and by degrees as it grows to learn more, it should be taught more. That is what God's Church is always trying to do.

If I can do anything for Jesus Christ's children, let me try. If I am an elder one, let me see if I, in a family, can't help the little ones to say their prayers, to keep from bad words, bad deeds.

And oh, let me resolve that if ever I marry, and the gift of children should be granted me, I will work with God, not against Him, in His work of bringing up these children.

But God brings His little ones up; He has brought me up. It is He Who puts it into the hearts of others who teach and work for the little ones. And so He will not fail to do the things which will help me. If I know He has brought me so far, if I have learned about Him, if I have been taught about Him, then He will help me more. There will come more teaching—my Confirmation, the Holy Communion. Then, if He is bringing me up, He will send more help. I shall find books, friends, services, thrown in my way. It may be He will show me the need of Confession. He never is wanting. I need not be afraid. Some seem as if they had had no earthly helper at all but God; everything in their homes has been against them, and yet He has brought them up, and they have always been His.

And some have had good homes, good parents, much teaching. In each case, God has been working, has been bringing us up. Help is always there.

But, again, He never fails to *govern*, to *rule*.

Ah, if God is bringing me up, I must expect to lead a life of obedience. I must look out for discipline; that is, being ruled.

I must not think I am to have all the helps of religion, and yet have nothing to give up, no hard tasks to do.

And if I have any part, however small, in the bringing up of little children, let me remember there is this to be thought of: God brings up His children to obey Him, and the first thing a Christian child should learn is to obey its parents and its teachers. If ever I have children of my own, I must govern myself first, or rather let God govern me, and I must try to rule the children. It is a *sin* of mine if I say "the children won't mind me". I am teaching them sin. Love and obedience are God's ways of teaching us when we are young, and we should work with Him and try to rule ourselves and our children in loving obedience.

"Members of Christ are we,
He is our living Head,
That henceforth we should ever be
By His good Spirit led
In the same narrow path
Our Lord and Saviour trod—
The path that leadeth by the Cross,
To glory and to God.

"Children of God are we;
Such grace to us is given,
To kneel and pray in Christ's own words—
'Father which art in heaven';
Seeking to do His will,
As angels do above;
And walking in obedient ways
Of holy truth and love.

"Of heaven's kingdom we
Inheritors were made;
Each at the font in Christ's own robe
Of spotless white arrayed.

Upon our forehead now
Is traced the suffering sign,
That one day on each saintly brow,
A glorious crown may shine.

"Christ's little ones are we;
And unto us are given
Angelic guards, who ever see
Our Father's face in heaven.
To walk in folly now,
We may not, must not dare,
Mindful Whose seal is on our brow,
Whose holy name we bear." Amen. (566.)

THOUGHT II.

"In Thy steadfast fear."

Texts.—"THOU SHALT UNDERSTAND THE FEAR OF THE LORD" (Prov. xiv. 5).

"O FEAR THE LORD YE THAT ARE HIS SAINTS" (Ps. cxxxiv. 9).

God brings us up in fear and love.

Holy fear. Do I know what it means? Not that dreadful slavish fear of which perhaps I have heard. The sort of fear which comes over people who have led very bad lives, and who find themselves sick unto death, and they think of what they have heard of terrible things which come to the wicked; they lie in horrible fear. This has happened sometimes: The sick person who has lain crying out all sorts of promises gets up well and—forgets.

No, that is not holy fear.

The fear of God is that loving fear of doing wrong, not because we are afraid of punishment, but because we cannot bear the thought of grieving our loving tender Father. There is a text which speaks of this. It says, "Grieve not the Holy

Spirit of God". How often a good dutiful girl or boy says: "I can't do that, I can't go there, it would vex mother so".

That is holy fear. And if a child begins by shrinking from what is wrong for its mother's sake, if a boy or girl does not go with bad companions, does not stay out late at night, for the sake of pleasing mother, he or she is well on the road to having the same holy fear of God.

That is how children should be brought up; the love that they have for their fathers and mothers, should teach them how they are to love God.

Let me pray God to make me feel this. If ever I have anything to do with children, let me try to teach them to be obedient because they love me, and do not want me to be vexed.

If they just mind while I am in sight because I threaten to beat them, then they have *not* holy fear, but that horrid slavish fear of which S. John is speaking when he says, "Perfect love casteth out fear".

Now, have I holy fear myself? Am I giving myself to my Father to be trained in holy fear? How can I know whether I am being taught holy fear?

Do I say to myself when I want to do anything: "Is it right"? If that is my first thought, not "Is it pleasant?" then God is teaching me holy fear. If I am really unhappy when I have done wrong and feel I must go somewhere alone and kneel down, and ask God to forgive me, then He is teaching me holy fear.

Again, holy fear will make me behave quietly, reverently, in church. I shall fear how wrong it is, if I am well, not to *kneel* when prayers are being said, how wrong to chatter in church, to giggle, to try to catch other people's eyes, to try to have silly jokes about the clergy. I should remember always how awful it is to draw near to God outwardly and yet to be careless, silly, full of idle thoughts.

And holy fear will keep me from idle chatter, from gossiping about holy things, about such things as Confession.

If ever I think Confession would help me, let me pray God to teach me never to profane it by idle chatter, by talking to my companions about it.

If He gives me holy fear, I shall ever remember God is present, that I am ever in His sight, and when I am tempted I shall remember Joseph's words, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

"Oh, how I fear Thee, Living God,
With deepest tenderest fears,
And worship Thee with trembling hope
And penitential tears." (169.)

THOUGHT III.

"Bring up in Thy steadfast . . . love."

Texts.—"THE FATHER HIMSELF LOVETH YOU" (S. John xvi. 27).

"O LOVE THE LORD YE THAT ARE HIS SAINTS" (Ps. cxxxiv. 9).

"THE LOVE OF GOD HATH BEEN SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST WHICH WAS GIVEN UNTO US (Rom. v. 5).

I am taught that I am to believe in God, to fear Him, and to love Him.

Three steps leading up to God. Knowing there *is* a God, fearing to grieve Him, and then, best of all, loving Him.

The love of God. God *will* spread abroad His love in our hearts if we begin patiently to submit to His rule. At first, as we begin to try to lead the life of a Christian, very likely the wrong things will seem pleasant, the good things dull and hard. And holy fear comes to us and makes us turn from the wrong things.

But as we go on *love* comes more and more.

We shall want to *do* or to *bear* something for our dear Lord's sake. We shall answer gently and bear being laughed at because we love Jesus. I must not despair if I don't feel as if I loved Him. By degrees He will draw me to Him, He will make me feel I like best to be where He wants me.

To pray to Him will come to be a joy, not only a duty; to go to church a delight; the Holy Communion the greatest joy I have on earth. I shall get to love to think of Him. But oh, let me take care. If He is so good as to make religious things pleasant, let me be really frightened lest my life is not any better than it was.

If I am finding my conscience is tenderer, if I shrink more from evil, if I am harder and stricter with myself, less hard on other people, careful about my work, and *all* my life, then I can humbly hope God is bringing me up in His love.

But no one is being brought up in God's love who does not love God's other children. In the Epistle for this week, which I heard if I was at Holy Communion, S. John tells us we know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. Dead souls are made alive by love. Do I try to do loving, kind acts to all among whom I live? Do I struggle not to be jealous, not to bear "grudges"? Do I help people who need help? Am I particularly loving to my parents, brothers and sisters?

God trains all souls by earthly love, and no one who is hard and cold and sullen and spiteful, who says unkind things, and tells unkind tales, is being brought up in His love, the love which begins in this life and is made perfect in the life to come.

"Yet I may love Thee too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art,
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart." (169.)

Thought IV.

"Keep us, we beseech Thee, under the protection of Thy good providence."

Text.—"The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, and upon them that put their trust in His mercy" (Ps. cxxxiii. 17).

To-day I may think how God will and does take care of *me*. I pray He will keep me under His protection, His providence. Providence means seeing beforehand. Now God knows exactly what will happen to me—all the changes and chances of this life, great and small. This is what should make a Christian bold. I can go out to my daily work with a sure trust that all around me is the loving care of God.

Have I given myself to Him? Do I want this day to please Him? Then He will take care of me.

Is my work very hard, very dull? He will help me to do it. Do I meet people whose talk, whose example, are likely to hurt me? God will let nothing hurt my soul.

Am I afraid for my bodily health? Am I likely to meet any danger or to be ill? God will watch over me. I can go on bravely. If I am ill, He will turn it to my good. And it is wonderful to look back and see how God leads us step by step.

Can I not see how often He has given me friends to help me, to cheer me? Pleasures have come, bright days of happiness, books, perhaps, which have taught me. It is wonderful to feel that each step is ordered by Him. God never deals with His children in masses, but singly, one by one. So I can be sure that among all the crowds of people, He has a loving eye upon me. Life sometimes seems very sad and sometimes very frightening. When these dark

moments come, all I have to do is to ask Him to take care of me. He will, but not always in *my* way. I may have to bear much pain; it may be that a time will come when God's way of *protecting* me is to take me out of life into what lies beyond the gate of death. But never, never will He let me be alone.

And so let me pray God very, very earnestly to keep me ever under His care. There are times of danger which come to people when calmness, quiet, doing what they are told, alone will save them. Such a time is when a large number of people are gathered together in a building, and a cry of "Fire!" is raised. Often and often people rush out, trample on each other, and often people are killed in this way, who would have been saved if they had listened to directions, often shouted in vain, to keep quiet, to keep their seats.

Now a person who tries every day to remember God's watchful care will at such a time as this be often helped to keep cool and steady.[1]

Such times do not often come, happily, but occasions may happen to any one when calmness and presence of mind alone will help one.

What should I do if some one, myself or any one else, caught fire, or cut an artery and began to bleed to death?

Scream, or faint, or run about wildly? Or send up a quiet prayer, "Keep me under Thy care," and do the right thing. (If I don't know what is right to do, I had better find out *at once*.) God will help His servants indeed in these times. His providence, His care, will not let them be hurt; He will give one *sense*.

Once more. Let this thought keep me from all *worrying* about myself or those I love.

[1] There is a beautiful description of such courage and calmness in *Our New Mistress*, by Miss Yonge, published by the National Society.

If I do my best I must not *worry*. Fretting is wrong, a sin. It is quite different from sorrow.

"O Lord, how happy should we be
If we could cast our care on Thee!
If we from self could rest,
And feel at heart that One above
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best." (176.)

THOUGHT V.

"And make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name."

Text.—"FOR OUR HEART SHALL REJOICE IN HIM, BECAUSE WE HAVE HOPED IN HIS HOLY NAME" (Ps. xxxiii. 21).

The Name of God, that is what I shall think of to-day. In the Bible we read so much of God's Name. Why? Because it is by His Name we know anything of Him at all.

God told His people little by little His Name, and they learnt His power, His holiness, but our dear Lord Jesus has made known to us His Name, which is above all other names.

First, then, of Names is the Father, and all I thought about fear and love will teach me how great and glorious it is that I, however lonely I am on earth, have a Father who ever watches over me.

But if I have gone astray, grieved my Father, fallen into sin, there is another Name which tells me of forgiveness, of safety—the name of Jesus—a Saviour.

A Saviour. Ah, that is the Name to which I must cling, for there is no other Name given to save us.

Do I feel and know I *want* that Saviour? Do I know how great my sins are? If I have never yet felt the reality of *my* sins, the first thing to do is to pray, "Teach me my need of a Saviour".

And if I have felt my want of Jesus, let me be ever coming back to Him. That dear Name is my comfort in life, in death. It is *because* I am His member, a part of Him, washed in His Blood, made holy by His Spirit, fed by His Body; because of these things I am sure God is my Father.

How great should be my love for that dear Name.

When I feel my sins are many and great, let me take refuge in that one plea—Jesus.

When I am glad and happy, let my heart go out to Him, my Saviour. If I have anything to *bear*—sickness, sorrow, reproach of men, let me say—"Good Jesu, bear the Cross *in* me, as Thou didst bear it *for* me".[1] The love of that dear Name of Jesus will keep me from sin; He, my Saviour, will not let me go away from Him unless I am wilful. He, the Good Shepherd, will go after his lost sheep.

There are many other names on which I could dwell, but the sweet name of Jesus is far more than enough. Do I know anything of this love for Jesus? Do I ever think of His love for me? As year by year and week by week the memory of His death comes back, does it bring any sense of all that His name means? How should I feel if there were no Lord Jesus? Perhaps I have no warm feelings, very little sense of sin. Well, that does not matter if, and only *if*, I am praying to be brought up in God's fear and love, and if I try to live as I pray. For, if I pray, God will in mercy show me my need of Jesus, and when once I know my need He will be indeed *precious*.

[1] From Dr. Pusey's *Private Prayers*.

" How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

" It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.

" Dear Name, the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding-place,
My never-failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.

" Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.

" Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

" Till then I would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
And may the music of Thy Name
Refresh my soul in death." Amen. (176.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom Thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by Thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to hear us."

Text.—"Hear me, O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy" (Ps. lxix. 14).

Have I ever thought to myself—"Would it make any difference in my life if there were no God, no Saviour?"

What would be the great difference to me?

I suppose first of all I should never think of saying my prayers.

And therefore surely I ought to think: Do I *really* say my prayers?

Do I feel my prayers really matter?

To-day's words are very earnest; "beseech" means to pray very, very earnestly.

Is there any earnestness about my prayers? How often do I say them? Do I *kneel down* when I pray?

There is a great deal to learn about prayer, but for to-day let me think. Do I really pray? That is, do I believe I am coming into God's presence, that I—weak, sinful, unworthy as I am—I can speak to God? Do I ever as I kneel down at home or in church think what a wonderful act it is to be able to put myself in communion, that is, intercourse with God?

"Mercifully to hear."

Yes, we need God's mercy in our prayers.

If He were to mark all the irreverence, the wandering thoughts, the want of heart in our prayers, how could we dare to pray? But He is our tender Father, and therefore He wants His children to get into the habit of constantly speaking to Him.

That is why I must pray. Not to tell God of what He knows already, but to train myself in intercourse with Him. I have much to learn and think about prayer. To learn to pray is the study of a life, but the youngest child as well as the oldest saint may, must pray.

To-day, let me stop one moment to ask myself: If I can pray more earnestly, if I pray as often as I can, if I try at all to *mean* the words I say?

"Come, my soul, thy suit prepare,
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He Himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay." (527.)

THOUGHT II.

"And grant that we, to whom Thou hast given an hearty desire to pray."

Text.—"PRAY WITHOUT CEASING" (1 Thess. v. 17).

Are those words true of me? That is what all baptised, confirmed Christians should feel—a hearty desire, a great wish to pray.

For, as I saw yesterday, prayer brings us close to God. Do I ever take home to myself the truth that Jesus Christ is the example Whom I am to copy. That all Christians are to be reflections of their Master. And, what have I read in the Gospels about our Lord's prayers? He prayed constantly, earnestly. Surely when I am at all puzzled

about prayer, and why Christians *should* pray, this is enough answer. Jesus Christ prayed. He put Himself into relation with God. So must His members pray.

But—I come back to myself. Perhaps, I have no love for prayer. I can get up and go out to my work without any words of prayer, and lie down to sleep prayerless. Or, if I don't by God's mercy quite leave out my prayers, I can't say I have a real wish to pray. Prayers are a trouble to me.

Now, I must always remember that the prayers in the Prayer Book are meant for baptised, converted Christians. Am I one of those? That is, is my will turned to God, do I know I am a sinner, that I am forgiven, and do I want to please God?

If this is not true of me, I must not be surprised if I can't feel I have a hearty desire to pray. But God will make it true. Let me pray to Him to give me the wish to please Him, to feel my sins, to come to our Lord. He will give me indeed desires to pray, if only I feel once for all what my sins are, in their blackness, their guilt.

And, if I am trying, if day by day He gives me His grace of pardon, I must pray that He will teach me to pray. The wish to pray does not mean that I want to pray for a *long* time. How long I can pray depends on many other things, but the wish to pray depends on whether I want to be day by day growing in the love of God, in my knowing just ever so little how much I need my Saviour.

And the wish to pray will increase. If I pray because God has told me to pray, prayer will grow to be a joy. People who begin to learn anything don't find it a joy at first. Music is anything but a pleasure when one is beginning to learn it. So, too, with the things of God, with prayer. As we pray, we shall learn more and more of the joy which speaking to God brings us, we shall feel that nothing can make up to us for missing our prayers, that

after prayer we rise strong, joyful, able to go out in the world, because our prayers have brought us joy and strength not our own.

"O help us, through the prayer of faith,
More firmly to believe;
For still the more the servant hath,
The more shall he receive." (279.)

THOUGHT III.

"May by Thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities."

Text.—"HE SHALL DEFEND THEE UNDER HIS WINGS" (Ps. xci. 4).

Dangers. Let me think first that God's help is better than any other. He is able to help me, and He is willing. Next, I must make up my mind that there will be dangers to my soul and perhaps to my body for me to meet.

What sort of dangers can I reasonably expect? There are the dangers I meet from the world. I may find the people among whom I live *do* tempt me by word, or by example, or by threats, or by laughter. I may have to face the danger of being led away by the world to give up a duty.

Or I may be tempted to read, or to listen to, bad and wicked things. Or I may be in danger from my own weakness.

I may be very weak and have constantly the danger of yielding to some sin. People give in to drink, to horrible sins against purity, and make excuses that they were so weak.

And there are unseen enemies.[1] Our Lord has told us in very clear words that there are unseen enemies, wicked spirits who hate God, and there are dangers which come from them.

[1] *Creed of a Christian*, pp. 98-99.

Wicked thoughts come into our minds, as if some one outside ourselves had suggested them; these are not our fault.

Sometimes a voice seems to say: "It's no use trying, give up". Yes, sometimes it says: "Kill yourself". That voice comes from the devil, him who deceives men; dangers from the unseen enemy of our souls are quite real.

Then the Collect speaks of adversities. Things which are against us. Many troubles there are; things seem too hard often.

We are poor, or we are sick; we have to work very hard. It may be our work is unhealthy. Or it is very hard for us to find time to pray, to prepare for Holy Communion. Or we do not live among good people. These are the sort of trials people have to meet. I must expect some of them. But let me remember God's mighty aid. Under His wings the Psalm says: He *does* care, He will help me. Only it *is* a good thing for me to know that there are dangers, there are adversities for every Christian. Do I know of any special danger to my soul or my body to-day? Let me pray God to give me His help to-day against it.

"At home, abroad, in peace, in war,
Thy God shall thee defend,
Conduct thee through life's pilgrimage,
Safe to thy journey's end."[1]

Thought IV.

"That by Thy mighty aid they may be defended and comforted."

Text.—"The Lord Himself is thy keeper, the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand" (1 Ps. cxxi. 6).

Defended, comforted.

[1] Psalm cxxi., Tate and Brady's metrical version.

These two words are what I am to think of to-day. I thought of the dangers which will meet me, which do meet me. Am I afraid? Ah, it is a good thing to be afraid if one does not run away; if one fears one's own weakness, yet knows that behind us and in front of us is God.

Defend. That means to shelter, to put something between us and danger.

And God will do this—He will put Himself. When the dangers arise to our souls, when wickedness seems just ready to rush like a flood over us, He will prevent it from doing us any harm.

God, the Holy Ghost, will fill my heart—if only I ask Him—with holy thoughts, will teach me what to say when I am tempted or laughed at, or coaxed to do wrong, or persecuted.

And in our troubles. God will make me able to bear them.

I remember the story of the three holy children in the Book of Daniel, who refused to worship the golden image, and were put into a fiery furnace.

There is a beautiful description in a book of the Bible called *The Song of the Holy Children*, which contains the song I find in the Prayer Book, "O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord". It says "the Angel of the Lord . . . made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind". Well, so it is with God's servants now. He puts some of us into what seems a real furnace of affliction, and by-and-by we find that God makes it to be cool, bearable; nay, more, the furnace changes into a garden where flowers and fruits do grow.

Even in this life God helps His servants to see what *defence* He provides for them.

So to-day, if I am going at all into temptation, among people who will in the least bit tempt me, let me remember

Who it is that is with me. I am His servant, His child, His soldier. He will keep me all day.

Yes, and all the days of my life. When sorrows come let me try and remember this which I have read to-day. These adversities, these troubles, may seem to be *against* me, to be for my hurt, but God will defend me from all evil, He will turn all things into good.

"And if I tempted am to sin,
And outward things are strong,
Do thou, O Lord, keep watch within,
And save my soul from wrong." (282.)

Thought V.

"May be . . . defended and comforted."

Texts.—"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost" (S. John xiv. 26).

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. i. 4).

Comforted. What do I mean by this? God will defend me, shelter me in the storm. Whether that storm be one of sorrow, or of great temptation to sin, His power will be all round me. But He will do something else. The one thing "defended" will lead on to "comforted".

And does comforted simply mean "tenderly pitied"?

When I speak of the "Holy Ghost the Comforter," do I mean that the Holy Spirit will soothe me, pity me, make me less unhappy?

Ah, much more. The word *comfort* has lost its meaning a good deal. It really means to "make strong"—to encourage. And so this word leads me to think of what

God means us, His children, to be at last. To become by His grace strong, able to strengthen and encourage others by the strength of God given to them.

Encourage. Yes, that is what God does. He gives us gleams of gladness every now and then. He lets us see we have got a small victory over sin, or that we have helped another person, and this is to lead us on to more. A good teacher encourages a child who is learning—say, to write. And when he really is trying, the teacher says, "See, that is much more like the copy, try again and see".

And so indeed I may reverently feel that is the way the Great Teacher draws us on. We are trying to copy Jesus Christ? Well, we must go on.

And very likely I feel now I am *very* weak, that I don't use the strength I get properly, that I couldn't do much to help others. Yes, but that is all right. God sees I am trying, and He will give me more *comfort*. Think of the joy of being, *not* weak-kneed, but one who is strong in the Lord; able to say quite gently, quite humbly, but *quite* firmly, "No, I can't go to that play, I can't walk with that person, I can't go to that party, or I *must* get up early to go to Holy Communion, I must say my prayers". And that sort of strong Christian goes on getting stronger. God makes him quite brave enough to *bear* hearing of new sorts of teaching, and to say, "Well, that is not what the Church and the Bible teach, and I can't go after the people who say so". That sort of Christian who is *encouraged* goes on brightly and bravely. God makes these strong sort of Christians willing to work for Him. Perhaps to teach others — little children — about Him; perhaps to help others to learn about Him. He uses us in all sorts of ways if we will let Him. And a Christian who is encouraged will *come* through troubles. Terrible troubles come to everybody, but those who learn in God's school

come out braver, humbler, with all sorts of new lessons learned, and able to help others. Now, please God, that is what I am to look forward to being—an *encouraged*, strengthened Christian. Not at once, but very slowly, very surely, He will make me strong, if I yield myself to Him, and then "Give to Him the praise of every victory won". If I struggle against temptations to sin, if I try—and ask Him to make me patient in everyday trials to temper—if I try to be kind, to give up my own way, I shall find God is always giving me fresh stores of grace. He has given me the Holy Spirit in Baptism, He will give or has given me the full gifts of the Spirit in my Confirmation. Do I know what my Confirmation is meant to make me? *Strong*, a strengthened Christian. If I am Confirmed, let me pray God to increase the gifts; if I am not, let me pray to God to put me in the way of being Confirmed. I must try and think of the joy of *growing* to be what He wants, what a joy, if once He should use me. Me, who am so unworthy, so weak.

But that joy of seeing Him will come only if I pray, and try, and pray, and try again, and learn that it is God Who gives me strength, that in me there is no good thing.

"Happy souls, their praises flow
Even in this vale of woe;
Waters in the desert rise,
Manna feeds them from the skies;
On they go from strength to strength,
Till they reach Thy throne at length;
At Thy feet adoring fall,
Who hast led them safe through all." (240.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that Thou, being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal; grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee."

Text.—"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Peter i. 7).

This is a beautiful prayer for me to have in my heart, and to use whenever this world's cares and troubles seem to press too hardly on me.

Perhaps just now I do not feel lonely or sad; well, then, let me get the lesson of this prayer into my heart, so that when dark days come I may have something ready, something learnt, to help me. God protects us; that is, He takes care of His children. Our Lord speaks of a hen who "gathers her chickens under her wings," and tells us God can overshadow us in the same way.

I know sometimes in a large school or in a workshop a big boy or a grown man will *protect*, take care of, some young trembling child, and will see that the child is not ill-treated. Well, if I put my trust in God that is what He will do for me in far larger, better ways.

I may be in dangers to body and soul; then let me lift up my heart to God, and learn to be brave.

It may be that some day I shall have to face danger. I may be called on to go and nurse some one who has a very bad and infectious illness. If it is my duty, then all I can do is simply to ask God that He will take care of me, and will do whatever is best.

But trusting in God is even more. If I trust in God I shall submit to the laws He has laid down both for body and soul.

For our bodies much has been found out about what is good for them, and if I trust in God I shall try to act as He by His laws shows He wishes me to act.

If I am obliged to go into danger I will not be wilful.

If I have to nurse any one I will do what the doctor says is best.

If I am told that certain things are bad for my body I will avoid those things.

It is no use eating very unwholesome food, or not enough food, and saying we trust God will help us, when we are flying straight in the face of His laws.

It is no use, if we are nursing somebody who has, say, scarlet fever, saying we trust in God, and then going calmly among other people and lending things which have been used in the sick person's room, and expecting no harm to come.

It is no use for a person, who sees that the drains in his or her house are quite out of order, to say that he or she will trust God—no harm will come of it—and then perhaps a child catches diphtheria and dies.

God has given us laws for the rule of our bodies, and He wishes us to find them out and obey them.

Doctors who find out about health are doing His work just as much as clergymen are; and it is our duty to obey the rules the doctor gives us, and trust God to bless them. That is real trust. And, in like manner, for the health of

our souls, God has given us ways of getting help. He tells us we shall not be well in our souls if we don't pray, if we don't eat the Flesh of Christ, and drink His Blood. Yet many people do none of these things, and yet say they trust in God.

Is this real trust? No. To trust God is to do His will, and believe He will indeed take care of us, and protect us.

To do our duty bravely, and put ourselves in God's hands, that is trusting Him.

It is my duty to go to that particular house or place where I may find myself in great danger to my body or my soul, where I may be abused, mocked, or hated. In this I can put myself into God's hands to protect me. In a moment I can lift up my heart and His care will be all around me. I may be ill, the doctor may tell me I shall perhaps die, or that he must do something to me which will hurt me very much, and then, if I have trained myself to trust God in my everyday life, He will not leave me, He will help me to once more put my trust in Him.

He will be my protector now and for ever, until death.

"Thine for ever, O how blest
They who find in Thee their rest;
Saviour, Guardian, Heavenly Friend,
O defend us to the end." (280.)

THOUGHT II.

"Without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy."

Text.—"APART FROM ME, YE CAN DO NOTHING" (S. John xv. 5).

I have read, and also very often heard, our Lord's words to His disciples about the Vine and the branches. He is the Vine and we are His branches, and just as a branch when it is cut off from its tree lies dead—no leaves, no fruit—so will it be with me away from Jesus.

Do I feel I know this?

As I go to my day's work do I know that away from Jesus I shall fall.

If I know this:—

1. I must say my prayers before I go out.

2. I must lift my heart to God during the long hours.

3. I must not go to places where I feel I cannot ask Jesus to be with me. If I do I shall fail.

Do I ever trust to myself? Am I ever inclined to look down on others and say, "*I* should never behave as so and so does"? And if I have boasted or been conceited, is it not here that I have fallen into some sin?

The truth is: Everything that is good in us is there, because Jesus is working in us by His Holy Spirit. Let me always remember this.

If I forget my weakness, if I get conceited because I am respectable, or clever, or liked by other people, or, worse than all, pleased with myself for being thought fond of going to church—if any of these thoughts lead me away, I must not be surprised at some bad fault mastering me.

S. Peter began with a little boasting of his bravery; he finished by cursing and denying his Lord. Out of this fault he rose humble and forgiven. So will it be with me, with any who face their sins, confess them, and rise trusting only to Jesus.

O Lord Christ, Who hast said, "Apart from Me ye can do nothing," help me never to leave Thee a moment during this day but keep me close to Thee, "leave me not, neither forsake me, O Lord God of my salvation".

"I could not do without Thee,
I cannot stand alone;
I have no strength or goodness,
No wisdom of my own.

But thou, beloved Saviour,
Art all in all to me,
And weakness will be power
If leaning hard on Thee." (186.)

THOUGHT III.

"Increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy."

Text.—"O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD, FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER" (Ps. cxxxvii. 1).

Do I ever think of God's mercy—that is, of His kindness, His pity, His forbearance to me—to all of us His children?

He lets us see by Jesus Christ how pitiful He is. God's mercy overshadows us all our lives.

And it is a good thing for me to stop and think if I can't find out how merciful He has been to me.

He is merciful in different ways to different people. What has he done for me?

He has given me my life, my life which is to be used for Him.

He has given me the opportunity to learn about Him. He has given me friends. Perhaps I can look back and remember some time when I was just on the edge of some great sin, and I was kept from it, or some danger to my body or my soul, in which I was kept safe, or some trouble which made me think of God.

And to-day I pray He will give me more of His mercy. All sorts of mercies I need—for my body, my soul, for those dearest to me.

And God will give us more and more of all this; sometimes His mercy will come to me in the shape of a sorrow or a trial of some kind, and it will only be after the sorrow

has been borne, the trial faced, that I shall see how great His mercy was.

And the mention of His mercy will make me feel how much one ought to thank Him for all He gives. Do I thank Him? Has thanking Him any part in my prayers?

And, above all, do I feel His greatest mercy is forgiveness? Do I know daily what it is to come to Him and be forgiven? If I do not, then I must pray that He will increase His mercy and give me that sense of forgiveness which will make me know how merciful He is.

"Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven,
To His feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, heal'd, restored, forgiven,
Evermore His praises sing;
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King." (298.)

THOUGHT IV.

"That Thou, being our Ruler."

Texts.—"ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST" (S. Matt. xxiii. 10).

"THE LORD IS KING, THE EARTH MAY BE GLAD THEREOF" (Ps. xcvii. 1).

A ruler is one who commands others, and they obey him. A master and lord.

In England the King and the judges and magistrates rule. We have laws to keep. So it is in God's kingdom to which I belong.

Our Lord set up this kingdom, and I find its rules in the v., vi. and vii. of S. Matthew, in what is called the Sermon on the Mount. Now, if I remember some of these chapters (and if I do not I ought to try to learn at any rate the first ten verses), I shall find that these rules are to make

us *be* rather than *do*. Also they seem to grow out of the Ten Commandments I know so well.

If I belong to Christ's Kingdom I am to be pure, merciful, a peacemaker, I must not curse or mock my brother, I must not even *think* of sin, I must pay my due taxes, I must pray, I must not judge my brother, and much more.

This teaches me to understand that Jesus as King and Ruler requires His subjects to be holy, to be good, not only just to keep from stealing and murder—that, of course—but much more. To have a character made bit by bit like His.

Also I must not think that my earthly life, the life which concerns the things of this world, is not to be ruled by God's rules.

I was thinking a little while ago about what trusting in Him means, and I saw that it means obeying all His laws. Well, if God is my Ruler, Christ my Master, I must obey Him always and in all places.

And I must take trouble to find out His laws.

The laws by which He rules the world of life, the laws of health, are His, and it must be unpleasing to Him to see His children break these laws.

So, when I get opportunities, through (it may be) classes of learning about nursing, or cooking, or health, or about the beautiful things of this world, I should seize these chances and try to learn.

Christ is our Ruler, and He has made all these things holy. Once more, God is our Ruler. "The Lord is King, the earth may be glad thereof." If I get by degrees to understand this, it will keep me calm as life goes on, calm even when great troubles come.

Calm when I hear people say that something has been found out by clever people which quite upsets the Bible and the Christian religion.

"The Lord is King." I must not be afraid. All the great truths which clever men have found out have not upset the Bible, the Creed; sometimes they have upset stupid or wrong ideas which people have had about the Christian religion, but that is quite different.

The Lord is King, I need not be afraid.

"Rejoice, the Lord is King,
Your Lord and King adore;
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice,
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice." (202.)

Thought V.

"And Guide."

Texts.—"He shall be our guide unto death" (Ps. xliii. 13).

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel" (Ps. lxxiii. 23).

I have read that people who climb very high mountains always take guides, men who know the way, with them, and that without a guide people have often lost their way and died.

Or, on a dark night, in a lonely place, how good it is to meet some kindly person with a lantern who says, "I will guide you where you want to go".

And this world is a very, very dimly lighted place away from Christ. What should I know of the life to come, how could I bear the sin, the dreadful troubles of life, if there were no God, no Lord Jesus? But Jesus Christ is more than a Ruler who gives us laws; He comes close to us, takes us, as it were, by the hand and leads us.

I need a guide as I walk over the rough places of this world.

Jesus is my guide. First I have His Church, the great family to which I belong. The teaching of the Church guides me. I may be puzzled about many things; for instance, there are so many odd things said about marriage. Well, I have only to find out what the Church has taught, what our Lord has said. Divorce *is* forbidden, and so on. This is only an example.

Again, I might be puzzled as to the meaning of some parts of the Bible. I have just to ask, What has the Church taught? This I can find out if I take the trouble.

But the Bible *is* another means our Lord gives us of being guided. S. Peter calls the Old Testament "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 S. Peter i. 19); and David says, "Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths".

If these holy men felt this about the Old Testament, how much more should we feel it about the whole Bible. If I take God's word as my guide, what shall I do if I am tempted to pay some one out for a bad turn he or she has done me? And I remember that Christ says, "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven," and S. Paul says, "Be ye kind one to another, forgiving one another," and therefore I *know* that if I am a Christian I cannot take any revenge. That is just one simple example of how one can take God's word as one's guide, and over and over again one has only to *try* oneself by the plain and simple rule of God's word.

But again, the Holy Ghost is our guide. He it is "Who shall guide us into all truth". He it is Who guides the Church. He makes God's Holy Word teach us. He it is Who will fill us with light. He it is who makes Holy

Communion what it is. Every baptised and confirmed Christian has a *right* to expect the Holy Ghost.

This is most wonderful, most true.

He will teach *each* soul as that soul is able to receive teaching. Therefore let me, when I am puzzled or sad, or frightened, or before any difficult bit of work, or before deciding any question, ask His help in little and big things alike.

If I am going to try to beg a friend to do some such thing as coming to church, I should pray, "Come, O Holy Ghost, to help me". If ever I were obliged to punish any one I should pray to be shown the right way. If I have to decide between two ways—the right way or the wrong one; for instance, staying at home and going away —I must pray He will guide me.

Above all, in such questions as marriage, bringing up of children, or in any great change of life, I must pray, "O Holy Ghost, pour light into my soul". Let me begin now to make Him my guide, and then looking out for guidance will be a habit which will be a blessed help for me as life goes on.

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on:
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me.

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path: but now,
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears.
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

"So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

Amen. (266.)

Thought VI.

"We may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal."

Text.—"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

This truth, that things which we see soon pass away is very hard to take in when one is young. I know I must die some day, but if I am young and strong and fond of fun and pleasure, it just seems impossible that everything I see and enjoy will pass away and I shall pass away too.

That is what *temporal* means, lasting only for a time. It is so strange to think when one is in the middle of a huge crowd that in a hundred years every one of us will be dead. It is so strange when one is in a very old church, like Westminster Abbey, to think of all the people who have prayed there year by year, who have lived and suffered and enjoyed and perhaps done great things for which their names are remembered—all these have passed away. And I shall die. I shall pass away from all these things which last only for a time, and *then* ——

Well, my prayer teaches me this: there is a right way and a wrong way of passing through things temporal.

One way is to treat the things of time as if they were the *only* things, to think and act as if money or pleasure or one's work or getting on in the world were the things that lasted—to crush out all the things of the soul, thoughts of God, thoughts of kindness to one's friends, to those one can help, thoughts of giving up for others, and all these things. If one likes one can easily forget all about God and death for a long, long time, and act and speak, yes, and think, that the things we *see* last for ever.

"To-morrow shall be as to-day."

And then something happens, some awful trouble comes, and we find out that these things don't last, and then —— Is it easy all in a minute to find out the eternal things—the love of God, the peace of God, the good things of God which begin on earth for holy souls?

No, not at all easy. Perhaps impossible.

That is the wrong way of using the things we see.

But we may use them rightly.

We may use everything we see in such a way that everything we see will lead us up to God.

If I begin now to do my work for God, to be loving and kind to those among whom I live, to care more to be good than to get money or pleasure.

If I use earthly love in such a way that it reminds me of heavenly love, then I shall not lose the eternal things.

For instance, earthly marriage is only for earth, but a holy marriage leads us up to know the love of Jesus. If I am modest and reserved, careful not to yield to an act, a look, which is not pure, when marriage comes it will be indeed a Sacrament, the outward sign of an inward grace. It will teach me to be more self-denying, more unselfish, more gentle, it will make all my life rich and blessed. But to profane this by acts of sin, by wicked talk of the relations between men and women, by thinking and

saying that married people can separate and marry again with other people, by thinking and saying that sin before marriage does not matter if the parties marry—all this will go very far to make me lose the Eternal Love, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

And then I end by asking God my Father to grant this. Yes, He is our Father, Jesus is our Brother, the Holy Ghost our Comforter. All things are ours: the things of time that we see here—money, joys, sickness, health—all are to lead us to those eternal things which begin here and are made perfect in heaven.

"The roseate hues of early dawn,
The brightness of the day;
The crimson of the sunset sky,
How fast they fade away!
O for the pearly gates of heaven,
O for the golden floor;
O for the sun of righteousness,
That setteth nevermore." (229.)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world."

Text.—"In the world ye have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (S. John xvi. 33).

This is a prayer for the whole Church, for every one who belongs to Christ.

Last week I thought about my own troubles and dangers and of God's loving care for me.

Now let me think of all who are Christ's.

"The *course* of *this* world."

This means the way things go on in the world.

In the big world there may be peace or war, good trade or bad trade. In my little world there are the people among whom I live, for whom I work, or who work for me. And the course of things with them may be bad or good.

To-day let me think this great thought.

God is behind all the affairs of this world.

Wars, strikes, great misfortunes, such as shipwrecks or railway accidents, frighten us, but God is behind them all.

Nothing, great or small, happens against His will. Out of the most dreadful things He will bring good. As I read last week, He is our Ruler. But I shall not always find it easy to remember this. The evil that is in the world sometimes seems to get so strong, and it is hard to see good behind it.

And these things may and most likely will touch me. Perhaps not, thank God, wars or fighting in England, but other troubles may come.

A strike, or a long time of no work and the sight of men, women, little children suffering.

Or some horrible sin amongst people I know. A home broken up by drink, or horrible sin, of which it is a shame to speak.

Oh, it is very hard to hold on to God in these dark times. Our Lord knows it is hard.

Surely we must pray much that God will order things so that they will not be too hard.

And if more people prayed about such things as strikes and want of work and sin, the evils would be overcome, in time, more quickly than they seem to be overcome now.

And again. I may find it hard to hold on to being good when I am thrown among people who are wicked. I have perhaps to work, or I may know of girls and of men and women who have to work in places where it is unhealthy for their bodies and dangerous for their souls; where there is bad talk and temptations to drink, to swear, and to much worse sins than even these.

O my Father, if I know of such trials either for myself or for any of Thy children, help me to pray to Thee for them. Thou canst turn the hearts of those who have the power to alter these things, that Thy children may serve Thee.

Let me pray this week for all those whose lives are full of temptations.

For soldiers who are so tempted to do wrong.

For my brothers and sisters who work at dangerous trades, whose work makes them ill.

If ever I know about a strike I must pray very much for those who are on the side of the strikers, and for those who are against them.

"Thy kingdom come, O God,
Thy rule, O Christ, begin;
Break with Thine iron rod
The tyrannies of sin." (217.)

Thought II.

"May be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance."

Texts.—"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15).

"O Lord our Governor how excellent is Thy name in all the world" (Ps. viii. 1).

I can do my part to help or to hinder this great promise from coming true.

Governance means rule. The second text speaks of God as our Governor, which means the same as Ruler or Lord or Master.

His governance means the rules He has given us.

I am Jesus Christ's servant.

Do the people with whom I live see this? Is His rule of which I thought last week *my* rule?

If there were two people (nay, one person) in every family, every workshop, every factory, every school, who made Christ's rule their rule, the world would be changed, because God would govern the world.

And so I must do my part.

Do I? Am I faithful to those for whom I work in any way—my employers, parents, husband, or whoever it is?

Do I try to get the better of any one who trusts me to work or to spend money? Is there any cheating or pilfering in my way of life?

And again—

As I grow older let me be careful never to hinder any one from serving God.

I may some day be set over some one. My own servant or some one else's.

Let me pray to God that I may remember how much I can do to help such as these to be good or to be bad. Shall I forget that those who work for me or under me need Holy Communion, and time to pray, and to go out, and a place in which they can be quiet and alone?

And when I go shopping, let me think how hard it is for those who serve in shops; how late they are kept up, especially on Saturday nights. Can I do my part and shop early myself and get my friends to shop early?

It is so strange, and I can hardly believe it, but all these little things make up "the course of this world".

It is no use thinking *rich* people are selfish if I will do nothing myself, if I am ready to strike a hard bargain, to look out only for myself.

I must pray that God's governance, that is, His great rule, may come into every heart. That is what I mean by "Thy kingdom come".

Into my heart: His kingdom there.

If God is my King and Governor, and His rule the rule of my life, I am doing something to make the kingdom of God spread.

This is so wonderful, but it is so true.

"Lead on, O Love and Mercy,
O Purity and Power!
Lead on till Peace Eternal
Shall close this battle-hour:
Till all who pray'd and struggled
To set their brethren free,
In triumph meet to praise Thee,
Most HOLY TRINITY." Amen. (607.)

THOUGHT III.

"May be so *peaceably* ordered by Thy governance."

Text.—"THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE" (S. James iii. 17).

"Peaceably." I thought yesterday of God's rule and left out this great word.

Let me think of "peaceably".

Peace. Quiet, safety, rest, seem all bound up in peace.

How hard it is to serve God in what is just the opposite of peace.

If the affairs of the great world are warlike it is doubly hard to serve God. I have read of the dreadful horrors of war, and how just a few splendid people, God's very own, seemed only the better for it; for instance, General Gordon. And I have read of persecutions; how hard it was for *most* people to stand up in the fiery times.

And to come to my own world, how much harder it is to keep close to God if one lives among people who quarrel.

How dreadful religious quarrels are. How dreadful it is to hear Christians abusing other Christians because they do not agree about all points!

How dreadful that professing Christians should mock at other Christians, or should stir up strife and bitterness.

Do I ever argue about religion? Do I ever laugh at

other people? Do I mock at good people who use Confession or go very often to Communion, or do things of which *I* may not see the good?

Or again, it is wrong to pray this prayer about "peaceably ordered" if I do nothing to bring about peace in my home and in the place in which I work.

Do I quarrel with those with whom I live and work? Am I quarrelsome with my neighbours or companions?

If so, all this prevents the rule of God in my heart.

Gentleness, peacemaking, are what He commands.

And when I am with people who are violent, who speak against religion, what can I do? Arguing is very little use. Let me pray this prayer of which I have been thinking, and add this:—

"Though *they* curse, yet bless Thou".

For the peaceable course is hindered by violence of people who are outside the Church, who are not Christians.

When I go into the Park in London on Sundays I may hear people telling poor souls that there is no God and no Christ.

I must pray again.

And the people of the world often hate Christians. Very often it is our fault. We Christians are bad-tempered or unkind, and it puts these people off.

For it is not generally Christian *goodness* that frets people, but the *faults* of Christians.

Yet now and then we do find people who hate good things, who hate people to go to church, to Holy Communion. I have heard of a man swearing at his child for these things. If this sort of thing falls on me or on any one I love I must only pray that He will give us His peace.

"Kept peaceful in the midst of strife,
Forgiving and forgiven;
O may we lead the pilgrim's life,
And follow Thee to heaven." (267.)

Thought IV.

"That Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee."

Text.—"Your joy no one taketh away from you" (S. John xvi. 13).

I must not, to-day, think of what is meant by "*Church*," but go on to "joyfully".

I know the Church is the company of all faithful people, and it is made up of people of all kinds.

Every one of us is to help on the work of Christ.

I have thought of *service*, but there is a word to-day which shows me *how* Christ is to be served.

"Joyfully."

This is how, not sadly, not complainingly, not with doleful faces.

Joy is one of the marks of a Christian.

We are to go about our work with gladness. Why?

Because: "There is more in Jesus Christ to make us glad than there is in the world to make us sorry".[1]

Because Jesus Christ is not far away from us, but with us, *in* us.

Because neither death, nor life, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, am I beginning to understand the joy of being a Christian? I may have many a trial, many a bitter cup to drink, many sad partings, many falls into sin, but do I feel that Jesus Christ is so much to me that to serve Him *is* joy?

Now, unless Christians—those who make up the whole Church—feel His joy, the Church cannot joyfully serve Him.

[1] Rainy on the Epistle to the Philippians.

How can I serve Him joyfully?

By degrees. I may be sure that if I try to please Him, if I put Him first, His service will become joy.

And some day a bit of work will be given me, it may be only waiting on some one who is ill, or helping some one to carry a heavy burden; suddenly on my soul will flash the words, "ye did it unto Me".

Then I shall get a sense of joy, and this sense will grow. And it is good to begin to *try* for this joy in the Lord's service in several ways.

One way is to try to look always at the bright side of things, trying never to grumble. It is so sad to hear people grumble, grumble, always, at everything.

Again, I might try to find joy in the things God has put all around me.

It is a good thing to look at sunsets, flowers, beautiful pictures, and try to find pleasure in them. And, if one is in the country, one should indeed try to get pleasure out of country sights and sounds. The singing of birds, the sweet smell of the new-mown hay, the rushing waters of the brooks, and many more.

Again, I should try to find joy in hearing of good and brave deeds. My heart should bound with joy when I hear of some one who has risked his life to save another, or of some one who does an act of unselfish kindness.

And when I am in church, I might try more and more to enter into the joy of worship.

To get away from the troubles and sins of the world outside, and make the short time spent in church a real and holy joy, should be my aim.

So will my life be raised up to His life, so shall my heart be ever full of praise, so shall He make all my life one act of worship, working, resting, living, dying in Him.

"Jesu, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou fount of life, Thou light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again." (190.)

THOUGHT V.

"In all godly quietness."

Text.—"IN QUIETNESS AND IN CONFIDENCE SHALL BE YOUR STRENGTH" (Isa. xxx. 16).

We pray every time we are at church at morning or evening prayer that we may lead a *godly* life, *i.e.*, a life like God.

Here we speak of godly quietness. I suppose that godly quietness means that God's great family should be at peace in itself, that Christians should not quarrel about religion or about anything else.

How can godly quietness have anything to do with me?

First of all, I must be godly, that is, holy. I must not think I can strive after peace and quiet at any price.

I must *never* give up good things for the sake of being let alone.

I must never be afraid to say wrong things *are* wrong things. But there may be much godly quietness in the midst of a hard fight against sin.

The beginning of godly quietness, of confidence, is the habit of looking always to God at all times: in happy days, in sad days, in times when we are frightened, in times when we feel lonely, in times when perhaps I hear storms of anger around me. Godly quietness will help me to keep my temper, to have presence of mind, not to be excited. This habit of being quiet will keep me from idle gossip, from overmuch talk, from idle tales. One saw when one was thinking about "The Lord is King" that one *need* not

be afraid of some new facts being found out which were supposed to destroy religion. We are to have a quietness and confidence which will keep us steady. Godly quietness will keep me from running after new-fashioned teachers outside the Church, from being, as it were, *upset.*

I must not expect this quiet temper to come all at once, but if I pray for it, it will by degrees take possession of my soul.

"Calm me, my God, and keep me calm
While these hot breezes blow,
Be like the night dew's cooling balm
Upon earth's fevered brow."

—From the *Irish Church Hymnal.*

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding; pour into our hearts such love toward Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee."

Text.—"I go to prepare a place for you" (S. John xiv. 1).

Prepared. Surely this means very special care for each one of us.

Let me think of this to-day.

God has special care for *me*. He prepares for me. It is so hard to believe this, that God cares for me. Yes, He prepares for me, if I love Him. And what is loving Him?

Is it having many exciting feelings, or being ready to sing hymns, or to cry when I hear a moving sermon?

No. Our Lord says "if we love Him we shall keep His commandments, and that we are His friends if we do what He commands us".

Ah, that is the test. Am I Christ's friend?

Do I obey His command and thankfully come to His Heavenly Feast, where He Himself is the Bread of Life?

Do I read His Word? Do I pray to God? Do I try to follow the rules He has given, such as these: Am I ready to forgive? Am I pure? Am I a peacemaker?

And, to put all in a few words, Am I trying to be what Jesus wants me to be? If I *am* trying, then I have begun to love Jesus.

Lord, I want to love Thee, but my heart is cold; teach me how to love Thee.

"Jésus, of Thee shall be my song,
To Thee my heart and soul belong;
All that I have or am is Thine,
And Thou, blest Saviour, Thou art mine.
Jesus, my Lord, I Thee adore,
O make me love Thee more and more." (191.)

Thought II.

"Such good things as pass man's understanding."

Text.—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9).

"Good things."

Do I ever think of the joy God has promised in that home in heaven?

Do I think of the rest of paradise?

It is quite right to think of the heavenly life on earth, how God helps us to live it now, but—when the fight is very hard, when the sadness of the world presses on me, let me think—"it is not for ever".

And also in happy times I must try to think how all happiness here is but a shadow of the heavenly joy.

Another thought is this: God prepares even on *Earth* such good things as pass our understanding. The peace which He gives in the Holy Communion, the joy of loving Jesus, the joy of having Him for a friend, this no man or woman can understand unless taught by God.

But if I do not *yet* know, I may trust God will teach me

if I pray, and those who know of these good things have something which no one can take away.

O Lord Jesus, teach me to know what Thy good things are, and to care more for them than for anything else in the world, and help me to look beyond this world's troubles to the good things which are laid up for us in Heaven.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,
Nor to man's heart hath come,
What for those loving Thee in truth,
Thou hast in Love's own home." (213.)

THOUGHT III.

"Pour into our hearts such love towards Thee."

Text.—"WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US" (1 John iv. 19).

I have felt perhaps how hard it is to believe I love God. I am always doing wrong.

This which I have just read teaches me to pray for Love.

He has given it to others.

He has filled the hearts of men and women with love for Him which has made them able to bear pain, cruel mocking —yes, death.

It will be so with me.

He will make me know He loves *me*, He cares for me.

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint.
Yet I love Thee and adore,
Oh, for grace to love Thee more." (260.)

THOUGHT IV.

"That we, loving Thee above all things."

Text.—"LOVEST THOU ME MORE THAN THESE?" (S. John xxi. 15).

Ah, this is a new lesson.

Not simply to feel some love to God, but to put Him first, above all things, above everything else.

That question "Lovest thou Me more than these?" was asked Peter by Jesus, and in different ways He asks us now.

1. Lovest thou Me more than money?

If I am to choose between getting money in a wrong way and losing it, am I ready to give it up?

2. Lovest thou Me more than pleasure?

I may be asked to go on a Sunday excursion which will take all my time up, and leave no time for Church, for my Communion, for my quiet reading.

Which shall I choose?

3. Lovest thou Me more than friends?

My friends may ask me to go to wrong places, to do many wrong things, to go amongst people who will do me harm. I think I may offend my friends if I say "No," and so on. I must choose between Jesus Christ and others over and over again.

Well, I must make up my mind that no love of mine is real love which does not cost me some sacrifice. If I give up nothing for Christ, my love is not worth anything.

"Thy life was given for me,
Thy blood, O Lord, was shed
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead;
Thy life was given for me,
What have I given for Thee?" (259.)

Thought V.

"May obtain Thy promises."

Text.—"Exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter i. 4).

Good fathers always keep their promises. And the love

a really good father has for his children is only a faint shadow of the love God has for us.

Do I ever stop to think that God promises me good things even *now?*

1. For my life here. He will give me what I want, what I truly want. Not perhaps as much as I should like, but enough. He will not let anything happen which can hurt me. Our Lord Jesus says the very hairs of our heads are numbered.

Again. He will give me forgiveness. I may feel, I ought to feel, how bad my sins are, but I ought to know He will, He does forgive.

And He will give me power to get the better of my sins, of my temper or my laziness, or any other besetting sin.

And for the life to come—we shall see Him; we shall be with Him.

So when I part with some one I love, please God, I will remember His good things. He will let us be with our loved ones again. Are these not good things—things which we shall never understand on earth?

"But He Whom now we trust in,
Shall then be seen and known;
And they that know and see Him
Shall have Him for their own." (225.)

Thought VI.

"Which exceed all that we can desire."

Text.—"The half was not told me" (1 Kings x. 7).

A great queen once came to see King Solomon, that wise king of whom we read in Church.

And when she saw all his riches she said the half had not been told her,

Now this story of an earthly queen just helps me a little to understand the meaning of "exceed all".

Exceed means "go beyond". God gives and will give more than ever we can *wish* for.

A little child is pleased when its mother tells it it shall go to school. If it has elder brothers or sisters it likes to do the same as they do, but it does not know how much good will come to it from school. It does not understand what pleasures there are in books, and drawing, and singing.

So it is with me. Perhaps God in His mercy has made me glad to join His great school and learn His lessons, but the *good* I shall get from His lessons, things He promises, are far beyond what any one can know here on earth.

So if sometimes I am puzzled, and it seems hard to believe in these good things, let me remember I am like a child at school who often cannot see what good things will come from hard lessons.

God is so great, so good, it would be strange if His good things were not even more than we can imagine!

In a perfect married life people who truly love each other find out by degrees that they have more than they even wished for before they knew. These earthly things teach us a little of what our life is to be.

Lord Jesus, teach us to be full of hope.

"Bliss, all bliss excelling,
When the ransomed soul,
Earthly toils forgetting,
Finds its promised goal;
Where in joys unheard of
Saints with angels sing,
Never weary raising
Praises to their King." Amen. (305.)

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Lord of all power and might, Who art the Author and Giver of all good things; graft in our hearts the love of Thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Lord of all power and might."

Text.—"The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly, but yet the Lord Who reigneth on high is mightier" (Ps. xciii. 5).

How often what the service for Holy Baptism calls the "waves of this troublesome world" seem to rise up against us. But, in all times of trouble, let me remember God is mightier. Behind everything that seems most great, most terrible, is God.

Then words for the thought of to-day raise me up above this world.

And, if I could only believe it, it is so good for me just for a moment or two every day to get as it were on high ground.

I know how good it is for my bodily health to get out in a fresh, breezy place, high up on a hill; I know what is said of mountain air. Well, it is so with my soul.

I have to live in the hot world of strife. Perhaps around me is much of what is bad and low; and, if I will, I can go right up above the world into the presence of God—for a minute or two it may be into His presence.

Lord of *all* power, of *all* might.

These words teach me something of what I owe to God.

Worship. Do I ever stop to think of God? Do I praise Him, do I thank Him?

I might think God is so great, what can the praise of a sinful creature like me do for Him?

Yet, our blessed Lord has taught us to worship.

The Lord's Prayer begins with worship: "Our Father which art in heaven".

So, let me try to ask myself, does God's worship take any of my time? Do I, on Sundays, feel I must go to church to join in worship? Do I join in the psalms and hymns as acts of worship? Above all, do I join in the worship of the Holy Eucharist?

Again, for to-day's thought, God *is* above all, but He deigns to ask us for our love and praise.

All work done for Him, every sin resisted, every kind word or deed, are acts of worship. I can, if I will, make my life of hard work an act of worship.

If I am ever called to lie on a bed of sickness, I can do the same, I can offer myself to God.

Once more God is the Lord of all power.

Things may seem very bad. I see sin all around. Terrible sins of drinking, impurity, cursing.

God will conquer in the end. He is with us, with His Church, He dwells in us, and in me by His Holy Spirit.

Let me to-day feel I can get the victory over my own special sins, because God is with me.

"Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of Heaven,
Feed me now and evermore." (196.)

Thought II.

"Who art the Author and Giver of all good things."

Text.—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him" (S. Matt. vii. 11).

The author. That is one who begins or makes or produces any work. The man or woman who writes a book is called the *author* of that book.

And God is He from Whom all good things begin.

All the beautiful things I see in the world, all the kindness, love, tenderness I see in people. All the joy that one finds in the world, which is really joy, comes from God.

It is good to think very much of God's goodness, to believe that He *begins* all goodness.

And if I feel—as very probably I do feel—how bare I am of all good things, let this word, this text for to-day, comfort me: God gives good things to them that ask Him.

Ah, but what are these good things?

Are they just what I should like — plenty of money, pleasure, not much to do?

No; daily bread indeed, perhaps, but far more than daily bread for my body! God means to give me good things if I wish, but these good things are, as S. Luke's Gospel tells us, the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Ghost.

And I must not be cast down if at first I find I do not *want* these things most. I very likely feel I should like many, many things, many new clothes, fun, and so on.

Some of these things may be good for me. People do need happy times and pretty things and amusement. If I feel these only to be "good things" let me pray. Pray God that He will give me just what He sees good for me. If I do feel I want something very, very much, praying about it is the best thing I can do. For if it is not a good

thing for me, and, if I do truly ask God to do what is best, He will in His mercy keep it from me.

And then other good things—those gifts which are surely good. If I pray to God, from Whom they come, Who truly gives them, He will make me care more and more for them. He will make me feel that to grow like Jesus Christ, that to be pure, loving, kind, is worth anything.

He will teach me to "covet earnestly the best gifts," but I must begin now.

Can I truly say I have any wish to be a little better than I am? Do I wish to be better tempered, more industrious, obedient, more prayerful—any one thing? If I don't, let me before I go out fall on my knees and say, "O God, make me wish for some of Thy good things, make me wish to be whatever I feel I ought to be". And then during the day let me pray that prayer again. For *not* to wish to be better is so sad a state that one should try to get out of it, and we can only get out of it by praying to God to give us the first of His gifts—a turning of our heart to God.

And if I have a wish to be better, let me go on praying that God will help me to turn my wishes into actions, that He will send His good gifts more and more.

"Heal our wounds, our strength renew,
On our dryness pour Thy dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

"On the faithful, who adore
And confess Thee, evermore
In thy sevenfold gifts descend:
Give them virtue's sure reward,
Give them Thy salvation, Lord,
Give them joys that never end." Amen. (156.)

Thought III.

"Graft in our hearts the love of Thy name."

Text.—"Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

Grafting is what I know gardeners do. They wish sometimes to improve a tree by grafting in upon it a slip of a better tree.

Now S. Paul says, that it is exactly what was done with the heathens who became Christians. They the wild trees were grafted into the tree of the original stock.

This is to be my prayer to-day. That God would take my heart and graft into it the love of His Name.

His Name. Yes, because it is by His holy and blessed Name we know about what He is, Who He is.

I have thought about that Name of Jesus, that sweet and holy Name which makes me know my Saviour.

Have I real, true love for that Name? Does the Name of Jesus bring holy thoughts to me? Does it "drive away fear"?

But this prayer is to God. How do I know God? By His name of *Father*. Now it is only Christians who really know God to be their Father.[1]

For it is said in a very good and wise book, that when one sees how much pain and failure there is in this world, it is not easy to believe God is our Father. But Jesus Christ has shown us God, He has taught us that in the midst of pain and sorrow there is undying love and that God loves us.

Now has God grafted into my heart the love for Him as my Father?

If so I shall fear to do wrong, because I will not wilfully grieve Him.

[1] See Canon Gore's *Creed of a Christian*, pp. 14, 15.

I shall not be worried about the days that are to come, because I have a Father Who is watching over me.

I shall bear what He in His love sends.

And this love will lead me to love the Holy Blessed Name which our dear Lord has made known to us.

God the Father. God the Son. God the Holy Ghost.

Do I ever feel as if these high things were far away from me? I live in a dull workaday world.

No time to pray or think much, what is all this to me? O, so much—I have a Father who knows the very hairs of my head. Who watches over me.

I have a Saviour, the Lord Jesus who has died for me, who lives to make me His, who loves me, who yearns for me.

I have the Holy Spirit who by His name of Comforter teaches me that He comes to make me strong, to encourage me to go on.

Is this nothing? Shall I not to-day go out to my work with the love of that Holy Name deep in my heart? Shall I not lift up my heart very often to the Blessed Three in One, and One in Three?

"Thy nature, gracious Lord impart,
Come quickly from above;
Write Thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new best name of love." (549.)

THOUGHT IV.

"Increase in us true Religion."

Text.—"BUT BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT HEARERS ONLY, DECEIVING YOUR OWN SELVES" (S. James i. 22).

True religion. What is religion? What do I mean by saying so and so is a religious person?

Religion means a rule, something which binds us to God.

People often think religion is going to Church a good deal, going to Communion perhaps, hearing sermons, going to meetings, Bible classes.

Yet are these things religion? They are parts, some of them very important parts, but they are really helps to being religious, rather than religion itself.

Religion—the *true* religion—is that rule of life of which S. James speaks in the last verse of the first chapter of his Epistle, the religion which makes one kind, pure, gentle.

The words true religion seem to mean that there may be a *false* religion.

Yes, for religion is a rule of life and of belief.

My way of life, my daily conduct, depend on my right faith. I thought of the love of the Holy Name which I prayed God to graft in my heart. Then that love is to bring faith, a life which shall be truly religious.

A life which is not made up of *seeming*, but which is real and true.

Is there any true religion in me?

The same questions I asked myself before will show me.

If I go to church, if I go to Communion, am I trying to let my life in the world be at all such as I pray it should be when I am in church?

In other words. Does my religion make any difference to my life? I hear in church of living a godly, sober and righteous life. Do I out of church try to be like God, do I deny myself any pleasures, do I treat others as Jesus would have me treat them?

If I am trying, if I think of God in my work, if I pray to Him for help against my sins, if I give up what hurts my soul for His sake, then I am religious, then my religion is true.

If I neglect church, never go to Holy Communion, hurry over my prayers or never say them, then I can

have no religion at all, but I must never think that enjoying church, liking to sing hymns, even going to the Holy Communion, are the whole of religion.

If these things have no effect upon the life I lead, if I am not kinder, purer, or in any way better for them then I am not religious.

But I must not be discouraged and think that because I fail very often, I have no true religion.

The only thing that should discourage me is giving up trying.

If I can feel I have left off trying, let me come back at once, and kneel at His feet and pray Him to raise me up.

Once more, these words "true religion" are *not* to frighten me if I am trying to please God, but oh, let me ever remember that our dear Lord was stern only to the people who made a great show of religion and yet were hard, and cruel, and proud.

This will keep me surely from ever being *hard* on others, or cruel, or unkind.

True religion is after all, loving service given by one who knows he *must* love very much because so much has been forgiven him. I know how much I need forgiveness, and so I can never be unforgiving to any one for whom Christ died.

"Lord, as to Thy dear Cross we flee,
And plead to be forgiven,
So let Thy life our pattern be,
And form our souls for heaven." (267.)

THOUGHT V.

"Nourish us with all goodness."

Text.—"I AM THAT BREAD OF LIFE" (S. John vi. 48).

Nourish—that is feed, support. Our souls need food, need life.

My soul has had life given to it if I have been baptised. If I have been confirmed, that life has been renewed. But do I take any pains to support, to *nourish* that life? If not, I shall die, I shall have no life in me. How does God nourish us? In many, many ways, but first of all by the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood.

One ought to look at the Holy Communion from many different points of view, but to-day let me stop and think of the strengthening and refreshing of my soul which the Holy Communion gives.

In a way I cannot understand, Jesus Christ gives Himself to be the Food of my soul, the Life of my life. It is in this way that the Lord takes my worthless self, my poor, weak nature, and changes it into His Nature so that—not all at once, but by degrees—I shall be able to say, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me".

Do I use the Holy Communion? Do I believe God does will to feed my soul with nothing less than Jesus? It is Jesus Himself Who comes, and Who will really be Himself my Food through the long days of my life. So that when I am working, or resting, or amusing myself, I may be quite sure that unless I have driven Him away by wilful sin He is with me.

And, if God is so good, so merciful, as to nourish my soul with this Heavenly Food, let me be very, very careful as to whether I ever hurt my soul, my mind, my heart by nourishing them on evil things.

I can do so by going where I shall hear wicked things (unless indeed it is my duty to go), by reading wicked books, and in many other ways. But, if I try to keep myself pure, I am working with God. I can ask Him to nourish me with all goodness, not only with the Holy Communion, but in many other ways. He will teach me to feed my soul

with His Word, with good books, with all that is good and lovely in this world.

But once again let me remember He has one special way of feeding hungry souls, and that, in the Blessed Sacrament it is our dear Lord, our Saviour, Jesus Himself, Who is our Food and our Life.

"Author of life Divine
Who hast a table spread,
Furnish'd with mystic wine
And everlasting Bread,
Preserve the life Thyself hast given
And feed and train us up to Heaven.

"Our needy souls sustain
With fresh supplies of love,
Till all Thy life we gain,
And all Thy fulness prove.
And, strengthened by Thy perfect grace,
Behold without a veil Thy Face." Amen. (319.)

THOUGHT VI.

"And of Thy great mercy keep us in the same."

Text.—"KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD" (S. Jude 21).

To-day's thought is this, that I must pray God not only to begin all these things—the Love of His Name, True Religion, the constant supply of nourishment—but that I shall be kept in them.

It is a very dreadful thought, but one which I ought not to put from me, that many begin a Christian Life, and after that—fall away.

And our Lord Himself has told us that only those who endure, who hold out to the end, will be saved.

Now, what is the right way for me to face this danger of not being kept in all the things for which I pray, this danger of falling away?

First, I must use self-examination at regular times; I must ask myself real questions about my life, my Prayers, about my preparation for Holy Communion.

If I see I am less careful than I used to be, then, indeed, I must, in fear and in real earnest, try to regain lost ground.

Second, this regular self-examination is no use unless I pray to God to show me my faults. I must try to wish to know my faults, and when I go wrong.

But, I must never forget that it is God alone Who can keep me, and that He is so tender, so loving, so forgiving, that He will not let me go unless by my wilful sin I force Him. If I can really feel I am trying to please Him, however badly, if I pray to Him, if I, with prayer and penitence, eat of that Heavenly Food, then I can really trust God is keeping me in all the good things for which this week's Collect prays.

And I need not fear for the days to come. God has begun a good work in me, He will finish it; each day He will give enough help, enough Heavenly Food for that day.

I can only really pray this week's Collect if I am indeed converted, that is, if I have bound my will to God, if I know I need His forgiveness, if I want to please Him.

"O Jesus, Thou hast promised
To all who follow Thee,
That where Thou art in glory
There shall Thy servant be;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend." (271.)

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O God, Whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, Whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth."

Text.—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (S. Luke xii. 7).

I thought some weeks ago of God's Providence, of His Care for all things.

And of the duty of trusting Him.

Let me think to-day of these words—"ordereth all things".

Now there is no such thing as *Chance* or *Luck*.

God arranges the affairs of this world. He orders the great things, the small ones.

Do I believe this, or do I think there is such a thing as luck? Am I so silly and foolish as to believe that some things will bring me good luck, other things may bring bad luck?

If I do I am not trusting in God's Care.

Is there any temptation likely to come to me in this way? Am I ever tempted to have my fortune told, to

read dream books, to be frightened by some such thing as breaking a glass or walking under a ladder?

If I really try to get out of these habits, it is a great step towards that calm, steadfast trust in God, which makes it possible for even the weakest woman to keep her head in times of danger or of great anxiety.

In those thoughts about the Protection of God's good Providence I saw how wrong worrying, fretting, grumbling, are.

If I can believe my Father in Heaven knows *me*, cares for me by myself, then surely I shall not be so ungrateful as to worry and grumble and fret.

God tells His Children to use care, to look beforehand to provide (that is, see beforehand). Birds build their nests for their little ones. But that is quite different from fretting, thinking of evils which may never happen, fretting about small troubles.

So let me pray God again to make me feel His Care is ever round me, that He orders my life, that nothing can happen unless He wills it. This quiet trust will come if I pray for it and check myself when I am tempted to do things which show that I have no trust in God's Providence.

And this growth in trust will serve me in the dark times, not of danger, but in weary days of great sorrow or of long sickness.

Then if I have grace to see God's Hand in the little events of life, if I have grace to see how all things are ordered by Him, I shall be able to trust Him, to believe that the terrible sorrow or the weary sickness are sent by Him, and that I can trust Him.

Then in the darkest moments I shall look up to Him and know that His Love is round me, and that never, not for a single minute, does He take away His Care, His *ordering* of all things for all, for me.

"Lord, make these faithless hearts of ours
Such lessons learn from birds and flowers,
Make them from self to cease;
Leave all things to a Father's will,
And taste, before Him lying still,
E'en in affliction peace." Amen. (276.)

THOUGHT II.

"We humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things."

Texts.—"I PRAY NOT THAT THOU SHOULDEST TAKE THEM OUT OF THE WORLD, BUT THAT THOU SHOULDEST KEEP THEM FROM THE EVIL" (S. John xvii. 15).

"DELIVER US FROM EVIL" (the evil one) (S. Matt. vi. 13).

I know that I am in the midst of much that is evil, much that will hurt my soul.

But Our Lord promised His Apostles that even deadly things shall not hurt them that believe, and the verse I have just read tells me what He wishes: He prays that His Own should be kept from evil.

That idea, that thought, runs through the New Testament, "unspotted from the world," "lights in the world," and so on. That is what Christians are to be.

Do I believe that God will put away hurtful things?

Not just all at once, but by degrees.

Is there anything in my life which seems to me to hinder my being good? I must pray about it.

It may be something which I cannot help. Perhaps I live or work among people who say bad words, or mock at religion. God will keep me. He will make a way for me to escape the evil.

But the hurtful things to *me* may be something I *like*.

I must be prepared to find God means me to give up some amusement, some friend, some occupation which I like.

Some people are called to give up strong drink; it is a hurtful thing to them.

Some find certain amusements, going to theatres, or dancing, hurts them. God will show them how He means to put away the hurtful thing.

If I do wish God to do the best for my Soul that is possible, I must be prepared to find many things are hurtful which I did not know were bad for me.

God will show me how these things can be put away, but He will not absolutely make me do without them against my will.

But if in His mercy He has shown me that there is nothing so important as my Soul's Salvation, He will make me pray this prayer really and truly from my heart.

"Jesu! Jesu!
Advocate for sinners pleading,
With the Father interceding,
We beseech Thee, we beseech Thee,
From every ill defend us,
Thy grace and mercy send us." Amen. (468.)

Thought III.

"And to give us those things which be profitable for us."

Text.—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good gifts to them that ask Him?" (S. Matt. vii. 11).

Profitable. That which is good, which brings some real benefit to us.

Our Lord once asked, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (S.

Matt. xvi. 26). So as I pray this prayer the thought may come that God may see many things will profit my soul that may seem very unpleasant, very hard to bear.

But first of all, the text I have read speaks of good things, and in S. Luke the words are "shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him".

Ah yes, that is the first great Gift—not a thing, but a Person.

Do I pray over and over again for that Heavenly Gift—He who alone can make all other gifts "profitable"?

He will come more and more to make me holy if I pray.

But let me think first of *good things*, of "*profitable things*".

First, I must be content to let my Heavenly Father judge what is profitable.

He may send me health, friends, enough money, Love, the great gift of wedded Love especially.

Now if any of these things come to me, and I feel they have rightly come to me, I may be sure He means me to be trained by happiness. God is not always sending us sorrow. Sometimes He wants to draw us by joy.

But I must be quite ready to take what He sends of poverty, grief, disappointment, sickness. All these things if God sends them are "profitable".

There is a wonderful text which says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11).

No child who is whipped enjoys the whipping, yet the boy who has been well whipped for pilfering or cruelty often looks back thankfully on the sharp punishment which pulled him up.

No bitter medicine is pleasant to take, yet how thankful people often are for the nasty dose. No surgeon's knife is

pleasant to feel, yet how often sick people are thankful for that sharp knife.

And God in His Love may send me things to bear which are really very like all these three—the rod, the medicine, the knife. Our Lord Himself says, "Every branch that beareth fruit He cleanseth it" (S. John xv. 2).

And, when anything small or great comes to me to bear—from a slight disappointment about some new clothes, or a bit of amusement, up to sharp trials of sickness, losing my dearest, being unkindly treated, and so on—let me remember my Father ordereth all things, and that therefore this trial is good for me, *profitable* for me. It is to make me better, to teach me something, to cut off some sin.

And, therefore, let me pray always that God will send just the things that are profitable, whether they are joy or sorrow, sickness or health, life or death.

"*Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*"

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own Hand,
Choose out the path for me.

"Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest.

"I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

"The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine, so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray.

"Take Thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill,
As best to Thee may seem;
Choose Thou my good and ill.

"Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth.

"Not mine, not mine the choice
In things or great or small;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My wisdom, and my all." Amen. (265.)

THOUGHT IV.

"And to give us those things which be profitable for us."

Text.—"GIVE *US* THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD" (S. Matt. vi. 11).

I thought yesterday of the profitable things and how they might be sometimes things which seemed pleasant. And at the end of this Collect let me stop to think how I am taught to pray not for myself alone. Give *us*, take away from *us*.

Our Lord has taught us this great lesson, "Our Father," "Our daily Bread".

Do I feel at all that I care that others should be helped, taught, fed by God? Do I feel that Christians are one family? Do I feel that all men and women are bought by Jesus Christ, and are therefore *my* brothers and sisters?

If so, shall I not pray for others? When I pray for help for myself, shall I not think of some one else, perhaps a friend, perhaps a relation, who needs the special prayer I am praying?

Can I not go on to pray for others not quite so near me?

Do I ever care to pray for the Church of God?

Do I ever pray that God will put away from His Church the things that hurt her, the worldliness, the unhappy divisions, the unfaithfulness—that He will give the Church "profitable things," whatever He sees to be good, though it may be chastening, the fire of persecution?

To-day let me think. Can I pray this prayer for any one I know? Is any one I love in some temptation, exposed to evil? Cannot I pray this Prayer for that person?

We see around us persons sorely tempted by drink, by evil passions; why don't I pray for anybody I know in such a case?

Perhaps I hear of some danger to the Church I belong to, perhaps of dreadful quarrels, of people who in the Name of Christ attack other Christians, disturb them at their Worship, blaspheme holy things.

Well, the best thing I can do is to pray this Prayer which I have been praying this week for the Church.

And if I feel I don't much care to pray for my friends or for the Church, let me pray God to make me *care*, to take away my selfishness, and to give me the spirit of loving care for Souls, for His Church, which all who love the Lord must have.

Praying for others will make me more loving, and will make me understand a little, just a very little of the Love of God.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind:
And the Heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind." (634.)

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is right without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think."

Text.—"Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me and examine my thoughts (Ps. cxxxix. 23).

Let me try to-day to think of right thoughts. Our Lord has told us how needful it is to guard our thoughts.

1. *Wrong Thoughts.* Our Lord says "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (S. Matt. xv. 19).

Do I try to stop myself when I begin to think of sin, of bad things, of something wrong, of which I may have read in the newspapers?

If I always did stop myself, how much idle talk, perhaps wicked talk, would be checked?

Again, do I think much of other people's wrongs to me, and of my rights? Do I think over bits of unkindness, of how badly I've been treated? Did I ever find any good come of such thoughts? Perhaps I have been put aside and some one else has been noticed and praised or given a bit of work I should have liked. I *think* and *think* about

it, and then what happens? Crossness, jealousy, angry words, sulky looks and behaviour. Ah me, I know all *that*.

And again, do I ever build castles in the air of what might happen to me? How I might get married, or get more money, or how I could improve my clothes? Has this not happened in Church? Do I not often let my thoughts fix themselves on some one's hat, and how it could be copied, or how one could do one's hair differently, or of dozens of other things?

What comes of idle dreams and thoughts, wrong not because they are always evil in themselves, but because they are thought at wrong times?

Work done badly, prayers neglected, Communions spoilt.

And perhaps loss of temper, and other people made angry.

Shall I not pray that Prayer which I read at the beginning, "Try me, O God, examine my thoughts"?

> "O most Blessed Light Divine,
> Shine within these hearts of Thine,
> And our inmost being fill,
> Where Thou art not man hath nought,
> Nothing good in deed or thought,
> Nothing free from taint of ill." (156).

Thought II.

"Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think . . . always such things as be rightful."

Text.—"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in Thy sight" (Ps. xix. 14).

I thought of wrong thinking yesterday, to-day it is to be right thinking. Perhaps I have never felt how needful it is to *think* rightly.

People often talk of their *opinions*, of what they think.

But it is not so easy to have right opinions, right thoughts.

How often we just think about things and doings much as people round us think.

But a person who has thought about what goes on, and thought rightly, is very useful.

As I grow older, I shall have to decide about many things.

What do I think about Sundays, about the duty of going to church, or whether it is right to bet, to go to places of amusement where there is much temptation to do wrong?

What do I think about my life?

And what do I think, or do I ever *think*, about God?

Now these questions concern me, and there are many more such difficulties.

I ought to think, how shall I think rightly?

First of all, I must pray. I must ask God about each and all things one by one.

Next I must use the means God gives me to get into the way of thinking rightly.

One way is, try to find out what good people think.

I must not take my opinions from the first person I meet.

If I am fond of reading, I must try to read *good* books. Good books will fill my mind with good thoughts.

God has taught the world much through great poets.

Reading good and noble thoughts of good and noble men and women will lift me up above everything that is bad and low and mean.

"Thou God of Truth, for Whom we long,
Thou Who wilt hear our Prayer,
Do Thine own battle in our hearts,
And *slay* the falsehood there." (513).

Thought III.

"And do always such things as be rightful."

Text.—"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things" (S. Matt. xii. 35).

Right thinking must bring about right doing. I must never, never think religion has nothing to do with my every-day life.

It has everything to do with it.

So if I have ever any beautiful thoughts or any quiet times when I seem to know a little better than I did how good our Lord is, let me be very careful that these thoughts bring about right actions.

It would be so dreadful to find one had had good thoughts put into one's mind by God Himself, or suggested by some of His great gifts, and yet these thoughts had made me no kinder, no readier to forgive, no purer.

Sometimes I hear something which stirs me up. It may be the story of one who has died to save another's life, and I think how glorious it would be to do an act like that.

It is a good thought. But how can I turn it into a good act? I can do so at once by simply doing the very next duty that comes in my way as well as I can.

Do right things. Jesus our Lord tells us more what we are to do than of what we are not to do.

He does not say simply, "Thou shalt do no murder," but He says, "Love one another".

And so, doing right things will keep me from doing wrong ones.

"O Holy Ghost, Thy people bless,
Who long to feel Thy might,
And fain would grow in Holiness
As children of the light." (211.)

THOUGHT IV.

"That we, who cannot do anything that is right without Thee."

Text.—"WITHOUT ME YE CAN DO NOTHING"; OR, "APART FROM ME YE CAN DO NOTHING" (S. John xv. 5).

My thought to-day is to be my entire need of God.

Do I know this? A little child cannot do without its mother or nurse, a branch cannot live if it is cut off from the tree, hands and feet die if they are cut from the body to which they belong. So is it with any of us. If I have been baptised I belong to God, and can only be cut away from Him by my own fault. I have a right to lean on Him, to be as a sheep fed by the shepherd, a child in its father's house, often doing wrong, but coming to be forgiven and fed and comforted. That is what my life should be. Always every morning, and often during the day and at night, putting myself into God's Hands. Do I feel I can be good without Him? I cannot. I cannot keep any resolve, I cannot be kind, or industrious, or strong to resist the bad things of the world, without Him.

Now, people who know nothing about God or what He has taught us, wish to be independent, to get their own way, to do what they like best.

But, if I am a Christian, if I want to be a Christian, I shall learn that I cannot get on a moment without God.

It has happened more than once that Christians—people who are really trying to be good—get pleased with themselves, and think it's themselves who are to be praised, because they have been kind or kept free from sin. And sooner or later they will fall into some sin, and perhaps this will, in God's mercy, make them know how really weak they are. "The power of Christ is not my grip of Christ, but Christ's grip of me," said an old Scotchwoman.

A sick person, who has been lying in bed for a long time, thinks he can walk from his bed to a chair without any help, and then he totters and has to cling to his nurse.

So it is with us. A bit of duty lies before us. We get on our feet to do it, and we think "I can do that all right". Of course I can keep my temper, and of course I can do that much for my mother, or anything else, and very, very soon we find we didn't pray about the thing and everything has gone wrong.

But with God to help us we can go right.

"Christian seek not yet repose,
Hear thy guardian angel say:
Thou art in the midst of foes:
'Watch and pray'." (269.)

Thought V.

"May by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy Will."

Texts.—"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13).

"Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee" (Ps. cxliii. 10).

God will help me to live—to spend my life here as He would like it to be spent.

Do I ever look at my life, and say to myself: Am I on the whole leading the kind of life God wills me to live?

God has told us pretty clearly the sort of life He wants His children to lead.

Godly—like Him; doing our duty to God.

Righteous—doing right. Acting properly to our neighbours—to the people among whom we live. Sober—doing right to ourselves.

1. Am I doing my duty to God? Praying to Him regularly, going to Church, reading His word, receiving the Blessed Sacrament?

2. To my neighbour? My parents, sisters and brothers, my friends, the people for whom I work. Am I kind, forgiving, helpful, cheerful, honest?

3. To myself? Do I take care of my body's health? Do I do things that are bad for me, such as staying up too late at night, neglecting cleanliness, eating unwholesome food, and so on? And my body is God's. Am I careful about Modesty?

If I am trying to live this sort of life, really putting my duty to God, to other people and to myself before any pleasure, then I am living as He wills, and that is what He wants.

I may often fall, but if I am trying, then He will help me to go on and on until He calls me to serve Him in another place—a better Home. And life will be a Hymn of Praise to Him.

"O let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent,
World fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent.
Thou gav'st Thyself for me,
I give myself to Thee." Amen. (259.)

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy Humble Servants."

Texts.—"His ears are open" (Ps. xxxiv. 15).

"Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come" (Ps. lxv. 2).

We do not know anything about God except what our Lord has told us. But we are allowed to speak of Him in such ways as we can understand.

And so, to-day I think of God mercifully hearing prayer, just as I have read of some great king who listened to his subjects' petition, or, better still, as one knows a kind father will leave his business or his pleasure to listen to his children.

These are only shadows of God's love and mercy.

Prayer, that is what I must think of to-day.

Will God hear *my* Prayers?

Yes, quite surely yes.

Do I want God to hear them?

Do I mean what I say?

Do I ever think what a wonderful thing Prayer is?

Prayer teaches me to come quite close to God.

And He is quite close to me. I can pray to Him anywhere, at any time.

Now, do I really think about God's great goodness in hearing prayers? Do I value my prayers? Do I take any trouble about them?

Or do I think: God will not hear me; I am only one among many? Well, it is very hard to take home to oneself the truth that God knows us all one by one. But there are many things[1] which may help me to believe this.

A schoolmaster gets to know all the boys in the school; it is said a shepherd knows his sheep one by one. And God, Who is perfect in knowledge and power, can watch over all His creatures, and know them one by one.

And do I ever think what is the use of praying if God knows everything? Ah, I must try to learn that my Prayers are not to tell God what He already knows, but to teach me how to grow up to God, how to hold converse with God. God has stores of good things for me, for us all. But, just as men cannot get gold out of the earth unless they dig, or corn out of the fields unless they sow, so God will not give us these things unless we ask Him for them.

So let my thought be to-day: Do I value Prayer? Do I take trouble about it?

"*And he said, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.*"

"Shepherd Divine, our wants relieve
In this our evil day;
To all Thy tempted followers give
The power to watch and pray.

[1] *Cf. Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, by Canon Gore, pp. 6-7. (I need hardly say that I am indebted to that most helpful little book for all I have tried to say about prayer.)

"Long as our fiery trials last,
Long as the cross we bear,
O let our souls on Thee be cast
In never-ceasing prayer.

"The Spirit of interceding grace
Give us in faith to claim;
To wrestle till we see Thy Face,
And know Thy hidden Name.

"Till Thou Thy perfect love impart,
Till Thou Thyself bestow,
Be this the cry of every heart,
'I will not let Thee go'.

"I will not let Thee go, unless
Thou tell Thy Name to me;
With all Thy great Salvation bless,
And make me all like Thee.

"Then let me on the mountain-top
Behold Thine open Face;
Where faith in sight is swallow'd up,
And prayer in endless praise." Amen. (248.)

THOUGHT II.

"And that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please Thee."

Text.—"AND THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE THAT WE HAVE IN HIM, THAT, IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARETH US" (1 S. John v. 14).

Petitions. That is, the things for which we pray. Not every prayer is good, not every request is one which God can grant.

Let me think to-day. *How* should I pray?

I must pray in Christ's Name. What does that mean?

Let me see what our Lord tells us about Prayer.

He says we shall have what we ask, *if* we are ONE with Him. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Ah, this then is what I am to ask myself.

Am I daily giving myself up to Christ, to do His Will?

Then my prayers will express His Will, they will be prayed in His Name.

Praying in Christ's Name does not mean saying at the end of our Prayers: "Through Jesus Christ Our Lord," but it means praying to God with the Mind of Christ, with the wishes of Christ.[1]

People often pray in their own name. They see some awful trouble coming, and they pray: "O God save me, turn the trouble away". And there is good in any prayers from the heart, but such prayers as these which are selfish, which do not think of God at all, are *not prayers* in *Christ's Name.*

But the Prayers God has promised to hear and to grant are the Prayers of His Forgiven Children. Of those who are trying day by day to please Him.

Am I a forgiven child of God? If so, I can be quite sure He will teach me to pray and will hear my prayers. If some trouble is at hand, He will show me how to pray. Pray with tears perhaps, that it may be taken away, but yet with utter giving in to Him, just because He is my most loving Father, and as I saw two weeks ago, He knows what things *are* profitable for me.

Now I must not be afraid if I do not yet feel sure about my Prayers. Let me begin to-day to pray more from my heart. To say the great Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, more earnestly, to try and make my other Prayers fit in with the

[1] See *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 16-17.

Lord's Prayer. That is, to pray first for the things of God, and only after that to pray for myself.

And, if as yet I haven't given myself up to God, if I am careless in Prayer, if I do not as yet come to Holy Communion, if Prayer is a weariness, let me just pray this Prayer: "Lord open my eyes that I may see Jesus". God will hear that Prayer, for indeed it is the wish of Christ Jesus that we should see Him, and know Him and know our want of Him.

"Come, come to His Feet, and lay open your story
Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
And the joy of our Lord to be true to His Name."

Amen. (637.)

Thought III.

"And that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please Thee."

Texts.—"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled" (S. John xvi. 24).

"Lord, teach us to pray" (S. Luke xi. 1).

I see that the promise to hear Prayers is made to God's Children, to those who pray in Christ's Name, that is, as being one with Christ.

And I know that though I may fail every *hour*, yet, if I only go back for forgiveness, and try again, and in penitence come to Jesus in the Holy Communion, I am one with Him, and He with me. Unless I am *wilfully* living in some great sin. That is true.

Awful, yet most comforting. So the next step is—God will hear me; how shall I pray? For what *may* I pray?

Well, the Lord Jesus has taught me in the Lord's Prayer *how* to pray.

First, in that Prayer I am taught to think of all my brothers and sisters. *Our* Father, I say, not *my* Father.

And then I have to put God's Glory first, and to pray that His Will may be done. All this before any prayer for myself.

Now, are my prayers at all like this?

Do I think of my fellow Christians? Do I pray that God's Rule may spread over the world, and in *my* heart? Do I pray that His Will may be done?

This does not take long. It does not mean I am to spend a long time on my knees.

No, even to say the Lord's Prayer from my heart would be enough if I had no more time, and day by day, please God, I shall grow to learn more and more of the meaning of that great Prayer.

Prayers that are drawn up by good people will help me. Probably I have some book of Prayers. I shall find that in these the daily Prayers are made to follow the Lord's Prayer.

In such books,[1] the daily Prayers are first of all, Worship, then Praise, then Confession of sin, then a Prayer for others, and last of all, Prayers for daily wants. It is a good thing to have a book of Prayers, and no doubt, if I do not know of one, some friend can tell me. Only I must never be afraid to pray to God in my own words, to ask Him for what I want.

Books of Prayers are good, because they teach one a little how to pray. But the Holy Ghost will teach us, will teach me if day by day I ask Him.

"Lord, teach us how to pray aright
With reverence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in Thy sight,
We may, we must draw near." (247.)

1 Such as *The Narrow Way*; *The Christian's Handy Book of Prayer*; *Helps to Worship*; *The Christian's Manual*. All good and cheap.

Thought IV.

"And that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please Thee."

Texts.—"Ask, and it shall be given you" (S. Luke xi. 9).

"Lord, teach us to pray" (S. Luke xi. 1).

I may learn many lessons about Prayer if I will.

1. I must learn to pray wisely.

That is, I must learn to pray for those things which will be for God's Glory, and for the salvation of my brothers and sisters.

It is clearly for God's Glory that we should be kept from sinning, that we should have strength to resist sin, and so on.

2. Again, I must go on praying. If I pray that some one I know should be taught to resist some sin, such as drinking or gambling, or should be led to God, brought to Holy Communion, I must go on praying. Our Lord says we are not to grow weary, we are, as it were, to knock at His Door very often.

3. And, again, I must yield my will to God. "Thy Will be done." If I want something very much, even some good thing, such as a friend's Conversion, I must be content to let God work in His Way. "Thy Way, not Mine, O Lord."[1]

And then there are things which God promises He will, without fail, give. These I can pray for with complete certainty of getting them. The Holy Spirit, the Gifts of the Spirit, the help I need. A greater sense of sin, a deeper love for our Lord.

Then there are things such as health, *enough* money to live on, success in work, earthly happiness—such as a happy marriage, a pleasant holiday, and many more.

[1] See *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, p. 21.

These are all things for which I can pray if I put myself in God's Hands and say: If Thou seest it is to be good, grant me health, grant me a happy married life, grant I may have a nice holiday, but only if it is Thy Will.

Again, I must not pray for things which God never promises Christians. To get the better of some fellow Christian, to become very rich, to be very much liked, and so on. These are not things which God ever promises.

And it is here that a Christian may be just like the Children of Israel in the old days, of whom we read that they thought scorn of that Pleasant Land to which they were going, and sighed and fretted for what they had left behind in Egypt. Yes, and God gave them their desire, and sent *leanness* into their souls.[1]

If I never pray for the best blessings, but just for the things of this world, it may be that the things of this world, a little money, some pleasures of sin, some bit of vanity may be allowed to come to me, and at the end I shall find that these pleasures have left my soul hungry —leanness has come.

"We perish if we cease from prayer,
O grant us power to pray,
And, when to meet Thee we prepare,
Lord, meet us by the way." (247.)

Thought V.

"And that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please Thee."

Text.—"I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me" (Gen. xxxii. 26).

I must pray God more and more to teach me to pray. After all, I need not be discouraged if I feel I need teaching.

[1] See *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, p. 24.

The bad thing would be if I thought I knew all about Prayer.

I must be content to learn little by little.

But let me try to pray every day for the things which belong to the Kingdom of God.

For the spread of God's rule in my heart, in other hearts, in the world, in the Church.

Every day let me pray against my own special sins. It may be a sin of temper, or of self-indulgence, some bit of idleness or vanity, or worse. It may be one thing or another, perhaps known only to God, perhaps known by those around me—but whatever it is, let it have a place in my prayers. It may be like a great mountain of difficulty, but that is what our Lord meant when He said Faith could remove mountains.

And so it is with all sorts of troubles that beset myself and others. Prayer about them, earnest frequent prayers, will cast those mountains of difficulty into the sea (read S. Mark xi. 23).

And if I want, as please God I shall want, to know more about Him, more about Jesus, more about the Blessed Comforter, let me try to pray quite simply in my own words, it may be, perhaps, alone at night, perhaps in Church, at Holy Communion, about this want.

There is a strange beautiful story in Genesis xxxiii. about Jacob, who wrestled all night with a stranger, and when the morning broke he felt it was no man with whom he had striven, nay, perhaps, it was more than an angel, and so Jacob said: "I will not let Thee go, unless Thou bless me". And then he felt the strange mysterious but most blessed sense of the near Presence of God (as the verses I shall read explain).

God will teach me even this by degrees if I go on praying. He will make me feel the joy of Prayer. He will let

me be content to pray for a long time if only I can get a blessing. He will make me feel that to know His Name, all that the sweet Name of Jesus means, is worth any trouble, any earnestness in Prayer.

Ah, these things, these joys of Prayer, may seem far from me *now*, but that is exactly what Prayer is for, to train me in Heavenly Ways. Some day I hope to be with God in Heaven, to have what S. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, calls "freedom of speech" with God. Prayer is to lead me to be educated into personal relations with God.[1]

"Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee—
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

. . . . . .

"I know Thee, Saviour, Who Thou art,
Jesus the feeble sinner's Friend—
Nor wilt Thou with the night depart,
But stay, and love me to the end;
Thy mercies never shall remove,
Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love."

CHARLES WESLEY.

[1] See *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 7, 8, 9.

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O God, Who declarest Thy Almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, Who declarest Thy Almighty Power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity."

Text.—"The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (Ps. ciii. 8).

I have been thinking a great deal about Prayer.

Ought not these thoughts to lift me up to some idea of the Tender Love of God?

He is able to do everything, He is Almighty, but for Christians and to Christians He loves to show that Power in Love. If I have been to Church on this Sunday evening, I shall have heard the story of Elijah the prophet. How he went into a lonely place and lay down, tired out, and prayed that God would take away his life; it was no good trying any longer, he thought. He seemed to be the only prophet of the Lord left, what was the use of struggling any more against the wicked queen? And there came to Elijah in this moment of dark despair the vision of a great wind rending the rocks, and of an earthquake, and of a fire, but God was in none of these, but after all the terror

of this—these sights and sounds—there came *the* Voice, so quiet and still, bidding him to be of good courage, to be sure he was not the only one left. And this story is really a parable. It may come to any Christian soul—that sense of being alone. What is the good of holding out against evil, or trying any longer? Everything in one's life is against one; it is very nice for rich people, who have plenty of time, to speak of going to Church, and of leading a good life, but for oneself it is impossible.

And if one listens, there will come a low quiet voice, clear, indeed, if one will hear, telling one of God's Love, telling one to be brave, to go back to the duty one has to do.

Yes, God shows Himself in Mercy, in Pity.

And, again, He tries every way with us. He draws us by Love. He sends us all sorts of things, bits of happiness, people to help us, unexpected kindnesses. Do I try to look out for God's Power in these ways? Do I feel He is working by Tenderness and Love? Judgments there are sometimes. If I read my Bible I shall see how terrible judgments fell on the Jews for refusing Him, how judgments fell on individuals. I must never, never try to look out for judgments to fall on other people. Our Lord has warned us against that. But I may be quite sure that a course of sin does often bring God's judgment very surely on the sinner.

A life given up to drink, to impurity, ends miserably. God's judgments are seen sometimes.

Once an English Priest was in the South of France, and he came on the ruins of a well-known Monastery, which had been noted, not for goodness, but for every kind of sin. A Nun who was living on the spot showed him over, and when he noticed the ruin which had come, she said: "Ah, yes, Sir, the good God has His judgments".[1] But God is

[1] From a Sermon by Canon Gore.

so good, He wishes His children to watch for Him in quiet tender ways. He wants us to feel His Power when He works, as He does, wonders of grace in men's hearts. Do I feel this—how those far away from Him are led to Him, as I may know if ever I take the trouble to read or to hear of the work in the Mission Field?

He wants us to see His Power in our lives, how He arranges things for us. Raises up friends, sends us teaching just when we need it, removes things that hinder us, softens people's hearts. Sometimes it is quite a surprise to find how things we most feared are taken out of our way, and people whom we expected to hurt us by scorn or persecution are softened.

O let me pray God to show me how His Power does work in the ways of tender pity, that I may not force Him to send judgments on me, to raise me out of the sleep of the soul.

"Sing praise to God Who reigns above,
The God of all creation,
The God of Power, the God of Love,
The God of our salvation;
With healing balm my soul He fills,
And every faithless murmur stills;
To God all praise and glory." (293.)

Thought II.

"Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace that we, running the way of Thy commandments."

Texts.—"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. xiii. 14).

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the Throne of Grace" (Heb. iv. 16).

God's Grace. I have heard these words very often. I have been taught to say, "I pray God to give me His grace".

And I know God's grace means His help.

Now to-day let me think again of *how* it is and *where* it is that God's people get His grace.

Well His grace is clearly, surely promised to those who belong to His Household, His Church.[1] The Church is to be a home where all the children are to be fed. Now, do I belong to this Household? Yes, if I have been baptised.

And do I claim the gifts my Father holds out?

How shall I do this? The second text tells me. I may draw near with boldness—freedom, it is the same word of which I thought, when I was being taught about Prayer.

God will let me ask Him for grace, full large measures. But I *must* ask. I *must* use all the "means of grace".

Prayer, Holy Communion, Bible reading.

And let me again remember that these words are meant to be prayed by a Christian who is really a "Christian". One whose will is turned to God. Is this so with me? Do I bring my sins to God, to our Lord, and lay them down, and pray He will set me free from their load? Then, and then only, can I begin to run the way of His Commandments. Is there any sin on my conscience now? Is there anything between me and God? Then let me pray God to give me grace to find it out, to bring it into His Presence, to set to work to fight against it.

This may be the beginning of a true conversion. But it does happen to some happy souls to have always tried from childhood, little by little, to please God. They began with simple obedient ways, simple prayers, simple duties, and bit by bit they are led on to fresh beginnings. Then God gives fresh measures of His grace, and, if it is so, it will be always joy to please Him. Let me pray Him to be always giving me fresh measures of His Grace.

[1] *Creed of a Christian*, pp. 74, 75.

For I ought to know that there is no such thing as standing still in the Christian life, and that I must always please God, make fresh beginnings. Every Holy Communion should be a fresh start, every birthday, every fresh stage in life. God will give me large measures if I only ask Him. Let me ask Him to-day for a *great* deal of grace. I may know of some difficult duty, some great temptation which I must meet. Let me ask for grace, and expect to get it.

"Love of God, so free and changeless,
Blood of Christ, so rich and free,
Grace of God, so strong and boundless,
Magnify it all in me. Even me." (629.)

Thought III.

"That we, running the way of Thy commandments."

Texts.—"I WILL RUN THE WAY OF THY COMMANDMENTS WHEN THOU HAST SET MY HEART AT LIBERTY" (Ps. cxix. 32).

"LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US" (Heb. xii. 1).

I must often have heard of the Christian life being like a race. To run a race well, one must be armed properly, and fed properly, and have no heavy weight to carry.

And runners in a race have to keep in the course marked out for them.

The words of which I am thinking tell me the way in which I am to run. God's Commandments, the Rule He has laid down for all His servants.

That rule is not hard for me to know: the Ten Commandments as our Lord explained them in the great Sermon on the Mount. I have a clear and easy summary in the Duty to God and the Duty to my neighbour in the Catechism. That is the path in which every Christian has to

try to run. No other. It is no use thinking exciting services, exciting feelings, talk about my faith in my Saviour, or anything else will avail me if I am not trying to keep our Lord's rules. He explained them in the Sermon on the Mount, and it is wonderful how any one can suppose anybody can please God unless he or she is trying to keep them. Now, this thought of having a race to run may help me. First, I may have to go slowly—people who start on a long race often begin slowly. I cannot go fast at first. If I have been trying a long time, I ought to go faster.

And what is going faster? Well, I suppose it means that a Christian who is *running* in the way of God's Commandments is not so much held back by sin, he or she has by degrees conquered the hot temper, or the jealousy, or the wish to drink, or the wicked wishes that at *first* held him back.

That is what the text means: "When Thou hast set my heart at liberty". Indeed, to keep God's holy rules will make me free. I shall not be a slave to my temper, or wrong wishes, or my idleness, or to the dreadful demon of drink, if God gives me His grace to keep His commandments.

And, again, all these Rules, as explained by our Lord, mean not so much that we are *not* to do wrong, as we are to *do* right. And doing right will keep me sometimes from doing wrong—that is, perhaps, what *running* means. A person who is *running* has no time to look about, to dawdle. And a person who is set on pleasing God will find that, little by little, that service takes up all his days. Not that he never enjoys himself, has no fun or amusement. Not a bit of it—only God is with him in his amusements too; he is keeping the Commandments in them as well as in his work. Running a race, running in the way of God's Commandments, means *being* in earnest. Now, if I am in

earnest, I must not be discouraged if I seem to go slowly and tumble down. When I fall, our Lord is always close by to pick me up, to wash me clean, *if* I ask Him, to give me a fresh supply of grace. So to-day, before I go out, let me pray God to keep me all day to run in His way, to keep His rule. Let me think if there is anything I can do better to-day, anything wrong I can avoid. Do I know my temper will be tried? O Lord Jesus make me remember, "Blessed are the meek"—that is, the gentle. Shall I hear wicked talk? "Blessed are the pure in heart." Can I help any one? Let me remember my duty to my neighbour is "to do to every man as I would he should do to me".

Never mind if I seem to run very slowly. It is a long race, but the end is the Life Everlasting.

"Run the straight race, through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and see His Face,
Life with its way before thee lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize." (540.)

Thought IV.

"May obtain Thy Gracious Promises."

Text.—"He hath granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises" (2 S. Peteri. 4).

Do I ever feel life is very hard? Also that it is a very difficult thing to be a Christian?

Do I feel frightened when I think of the race which I have to run, the fight I must fight?

Well, it is quite true that our Lord never told any of His followers that it was an easy thing to be a Christian, or that the race was not tiring, or that the fight with our sins would not be fierce. We must make up our minds to all this. But we must not be sad. To be a servant of Christ, to be God's forgiven child, to be guided by the Holy Spirit,

will bring us, will bring me, such joy, such peace, such strength, that, please God, I shall get to feel that nothing in the whole world matters but being Christ's servant. God does not leave me to struggle on without hope of rest and joy.

What are these exceeding great promises?

First of all, there is the promise of Life Eternal.

Now, do I ever lift my eyes, the eyes of my soul, to the Home He has promised? God has not been pleased indeed to tell us very much about what that life will be, but He has told us enough to make us long for it if we think of it.

For at the saddest moments, if one lives, we must remember this will not last always, there will come a time when "God shall wipe away all tears". Rest, Joy, Peace, are to be ours. There is the promise of sinlessness: "We shall be like Him". Ah, if I have felt what sin is—in myself, in the world, its horror, its blackness, is it not blessed to think of a time when all Christians will be holy, entirely sinless? But there are precious promises for the life here. Promises of forgiveness; I can always come back to Him. Promises of help, of grace, of power to serve Him. Promises that I shall never, never be left alone. Never (unless I drive Him away by wilful sin, by living in unrepented sin) shall I be left to myself. That is the Promise for to-day: "I will never leave thee". Do I feel as if I should meet temptations to sin of every kind, or perhaps one great temptation to-day? He has promised His strength. Have I asked Him? Ah, to-day more than ever let me go out cheered by these great promises. If I don't know them, let me try and look them out in my Bible next Sunday, or the next day I have a few minutes. S. John is full of them, so are the last chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or the first Epistle of S. John, the Revelation of S. John, especially the first seven and the last five chapters.

These Promises will cheer me in dark hours; God the Holy Ghost will bring them into my mind.

"And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.
Alleluia. (437.)

Thought V.

"And be made partakers of Thy Heavenly Treasure."

Text.—"Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also" (S. Matt. vi. 22).

Treasure—that is, precious things. God is always teaching us that our life here is only a preparation for the life beyond. That all good things here, even the love we have for each other, are only shadows of what He has in store for us.

So I must pray day by day that He will teach me (very slowly it may be, but quite surely) that beyond all sin, *beyond* this life is what I am to have, that is, Heaven. How can I train myself for this? Can a person who never thinks of God, except perhaps now and then on a Sunday night, a person who does not care to hear of holy things, a person who doesn't try to keep God's Holy Rules—can he or she expect that Death or a Death-bed will make him ready at once for God?

Should I be happy if I were in Heaven? For Heaven means the Presence of God. If I never care to come into His Presence here, should I like it if I were called into It now? Ah, no. The thoughts of the last few days ought to teach me what is meant by God's Treasure. Heaven will be only happy to the holy, *i.e.*, to those who are in Christ.

If I am turning to Him, if I try again and again, then indeed I may believe that Home is preparing for me. But

—we pray we may be *partakers*—that is, sharers. God does care for us each one, but He looks on us as members of His great family. Do I feel this, or do I only care for my own soul, for my own happiness? Once God makes me understand that all His children belong to Him and to each other, then I shall be led on to pray for others. To pray that others may share His Heavenly Treasure. And, indeed, He in a measure gives us of that Treasure already. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the message of forgiveness, the many ways by which we poor weak sinners may come and get a supply of grace—are not these parts of that Treasure? Shall I not long for those I love that they may be made *partakers*?

Last of all. Is what I care for most in Heaven? That is, do I really put God, His Love, His Service, first in my life? Is the wish to please God first? Then my heart and treasure are both with Him.

But until He comes first, I must not think I really want Heaven, even though I sing "O Paradise!" very heartily. I may fail and fall, but if God comes first with me, then I may be sure He is leading me upwards and onwards. I must never rest until He is first. Until His Service, the desire to please Him wherever He puts me, is the most *real* thing in my life.

"From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle and fight and pray;
Tread all the powers of darkness down
And win the well-fought day.

"That having all things done,
And all your conflicts past,
Ye may obtain, through Christ alone
A Crown of joy at last." (270.)

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THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Almighty and everlasting God, Who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve, pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray."

Text.—"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him" (S. Matt. vi. 8).

I can never think too often or too much about prayer. And to-day I shall think of what is so wonderful—God is *ready* to hear our Prayers, quite willing, nay, much more *ready* to hear than we to pray.

Perhaps it would make prayer easier to me, more of a delight, if I really believe this—God wants *me* to pray. Can I not understand this a little—a good loving father wants his children to talk to him about their troubles, their joys, their perplexities? And as I have seen before, this earthly love is just a shadow of the Heavenly. Yet it *is* a shadow. It is not that I am bringing God down to this poor earth, and making Him seem like men when I think of the love of a good father. No, but I am bringing earthly

love, the things of earth, *up* to God. Whatever is good and pure or noble in man is like God's goodness, only so faint and poor a shadow of it. And therefore shall I disappoint the Love which waits for me? Shall I go on finding my prayers a trouble, giving up for Prayer just a few hasty gabbled words when I am very sleepy and tired?

It is not that He expects long prayers. People who have been learning in the School of Prayer for a long time sometimes find it a great joy to pray very, very much. They kneel on in Church after Communion. If they are ill, they pray on their sick-beds; if they have time, they pray in their own rooms a good deal.

But I must not be discouraged. I may have really very little time, and not have power to keep my mind fixed for more than a minute or two at a time. That does not matter. Only let me *mean* what I say when I pray. Let me try to be *ready* to pray. Ready to lift up my heart to Him during the long day. Glad to come back at night to my prayers, even though they be short.

And can I at all understand what a holy man once wrote: "When we come to pray, He welcomes us, and gives us assurance of His Love"?[1]

Let me think of it—He welcomes *me*. As I kneel down by my bedside, or it may be in an empty church, to lift up my heart for two or three minutes, God welcomes *me*. He sends the Holy Ghost to pray in me, to lift up my prayers, and every now and then as I rise from my knees, there *will* come to my soul a feeling of real peace, of the sense of forgiveness and of help. As I *grow* in the Life of a Christian, He will probably give me more and more of the sense that my prayers are heard. All the Saints have told us so. But whether He gives me this now or not, I may be sure He is ready, so ready to hear His children's Prayer.

[1] Leighton on the First Epistle of S. Peter.

"We perish if we cease from Prayer;
O grant us power to pray,
And when to meet Thee we prepare,
Lord meet us by the way." (247.)

THOUGHT II.

"And art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve."

Text.—"EVERY ONE THAT ASKETH RECEIVETH" (S. Matt. vii. 6).

This is what I shall learn by degrees. The wonderful fact that God does hear prayer, that He hears my prayers. God's Saints tell us the same story. The absolute certainty that their prayers are heard and answered. Yes, but I must expect, if I pray really and truly and from my heart, that God will give me even more than I wish for, certainly much more than I deserve. Ah, how little could I feel I deserve anything if it were not for our Lord.

But a sense of God's goodness will sometimes come home to me. Perhaps He will send me in His good time some great joy. I may find that some one loves me, that I love some one. Perhaps, again, a bit of success will come, sometimes a sorrow is turned into joy. Some one whom I love is given back to me from a bad illness. Well, it is quite wonderful how these gifts will come often in some far better way than that in which I hoped they would come.

Ah, there are times like these in every one's life, every one, that is, who is trying to please God; times when a sense of His abundant goodness comes rushing over one's soul. He sends us sadness, it is true, but He also sends us happiness. And, again, He sends us more than we deserve in the way of help, grace for our souls. Oh, how little pains we have taken about our Communion, and yet how blessed It has been. How unwillingly we gave up a

Sunday walk and went to Church, and how wonderfully the Service and the Sermon helped us. And so on, times without number, it will happen that I shall, please God, *feel* His goodness. And I must expect one other thing. God may in His Love lead me further on in the Christian Life than I can possibly see or even *wish* now.. For every Christian soul He has a special call. Some He calls to serve Him in homes, in married life, in the workshop or factory, in everyday duties, everyday joys and sorrows. But there are some to whom He gives a clear call to come and serve Him in harder ways. It may be on a bed of sickness, it may be in lives given for Him, in nursing, in the Mission Field, in Religious Brotherhoods or Sisterhoods. And if the call is real He gives more strength, more faith, more courage than at one time we could have dared even to pray for. Oh, let me bear this in mind! God has a real purpose for me, He is training *me*. I may lead a very hard, dull life, but whatever it is He has a purpose for *me*. If I answer to His Grace now, if I do my work *now* for Him, if I fight against sin *now*, He will lead me on. I cannot stand still. God will lead me, He will give me more than I at this moment even desire.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind." (634.)

THOUGHT III.

"Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid."

Text.—"WHO FORGIVETH ALL THY SIN" (Ps. ciii. 3).

In two ways we ask God's mercy. 1. That He will forgive us. 2. That He will give us good things.

Again, let me never forget that God's mercy is so abundant. I mean, there is a great deal of it He wants to pour upon His children as gifts. He *wants* us, He yearns for us just as a tender father does. First of all mercies comes forgiveness. Ah, again and once again I must stop and ask myself: Do I daily come to God for His grace of pardon?

This is what everything in religion is meant for. That we should be forgiven, and made like God. God puts away our sins for Christ's sake. Because I am part of Christ, God accepts me, and gives me power to start fresh, and sees me, not as I am just at this moment, but as I am becoming.[1] Yes, if my will is turned to God, He will never grow tired of forgiving me. And I pray especially about the things whereof my conscience is afraid. Now, have I any special sin on my conscience? I know that when I do wrong there is an inward voice which tells me I have sinned. Do I take any pains at all to enlighten my conscience, that is, to train my sense of right and wrong? Do I try my conscience by that rule of life our Lord gave? It is quite possible to let one's conscience go to sleep all together. My conscience may give me wrong information, because I have never trained it. I hear sometimes of men who have committed one crime after another, and who get punished, sent to penal servitude perhaps. Probably very few of these feel at all miserable or troubled by their consciences, which have been stifled long ago.[2] It will be no excuse for me that my conscience was clear after I have done some wrong act—*if* I could have found out it was a wrong act. How can I train my conscience? By prayer to God for Light: "Search me, O God, and try me".

[1] *Creed of a Christian*, p. 56.
[2] *Cf.* Gore, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 147.

By self-examination. And if I have anything, any sin on my conscience, what must I do? Confess it to God at once if I feel I cannot get peace. I must use the means the Church provides, and go to one of God's Priests, and in his presence tell out my sin to God. People are sometimes held back from Holy Communion by some old sin, some grudge or quarrel against another. If only they would confess this to be sin, and ask for forgiveness, what peace would come! Is there any secret sin which troubles my conscience? Does any act done long ago, or quite lately, trouble me? Would *it* trouble me if I knew I were going to die? If there is, do not let me delay. To-night on my knees let me confess it to God. If I can't get a quiet place at home, let me go into a Church, or if I live in the country, into some quiet place away from people. I may feel there is something I ought to do in the way of making up. Some one's pardon to beg, some one's property to be given back, some one's offences to forgive, some lie to be unsaid; let me do it as soon as possible.

And if I feel I need further help, do not let me shrink from asking it from one of God's ministers. But the great thing is—Confession to God. Full, free Confession. Then will come His message of forgiveness, His Pardon. In the Holy Communion that message is given to each one of us: "Have mercy on *you*, pardon and deliver *you*". And if I need it, the message of Absolution can be breathed to me alone, the precious Blood of Christ will again be applied to my soul, and I can rise a forgiven child.

But—God will always forgive if I ask Him and forsake my sin.

"With my burden I begin,
Lord, remove this load of sin,
Let Thy Blood for sinners spilt,
Set my conscience free from guilt." (527.)

Thought IV.

"And giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask."

Text.—"All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 23).

Once a Christian is converted, that is, once he or she has turned the will in the right direction, and is a forgiven child of God, when that has happened, then *all* things are his in Christ.

Because our Father looks on us as *in* Jesus Christ, as gradually, slowly growing like Christ.

And, therefore, in spite of daily falls, of much coming short of what we might be—if we are turning to God then—there is nothing for which we cannot pray in the Name of Christ. Yes, God will give His children every good gift in time.

It is most true that I am unworthy. I am not worthy of the very least gift. Ah, do I feel this? Does there ever rush over my soul that sense of utter sinfulness and unfitness for Him that made S. Peter say: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord". Oh, if ever I feel this, let me thank God for this feeling.

There is a beautiful hymn (No. 323) which begins:—

> "I am not worthy, holy Lord,
> That I should come to Thee".

I should say it very often before Holy Communion, and, please God, He will make me feel my *own* unworthiness. But though there is nothing in me on which God can look with pleasure, once I am in Christ, then He sees only His dear Son, and again I must try and believe He will give me every good thing I need.

I may pray for the things I need for my body, or for what others need, if I pray as my Lord prayed—"If it be Thy

Will". And for what our Lord tells us are *really* the good things, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, I may pray with an absolute certainty of being heard and answered. Do I want them? Ah, to pray this week's prayer means that I do. May God give me the desire for good things more and more. But—let me bring this thought into my life: Do I want more power to fight against my temper? Am I apt to take offence or to sulk? God will help me, He will give me more power. He will give the grace of meekness. Or do I want courage to say "No," to *stand up* for Jesus? He can give it to me. Or am I so blessed by Him as really to *wish* to care more for Holy Things, for my Communions? God will give me grace to care. Or am I anxious for some blessing to come into my life? Do I want more teaching, or to be confirmed, or do I think Confession would be a help? God will send these blessings just at the right time.

Or am I anxious about my life; do things seem gloomy; am I worried about money; about not having enough work, or about some one I love? "All things are yours since ye are Christ's." God will help me, He *may* give me things to bear, but He has promised to each of His servants, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be".

He will give me trust, He will give me everything. Let me throw myself on His Love, and give myself to Him, and then all things are mine.

"Come, my soul, Thy suit prepare,
Jesus loves to answer Prayer,
He Himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay.

Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring,
For His grace and power are such,
None can never ask too much." (527.)

Thought V.

"But through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord."

Text.—"If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 S. John i. 9).

Our Lord deserves everything, we deserve nothing of ourselves. We pray God to look on us as *in* Christ, "accepted of the Beloved".

Do I really understand at all what I mean by saying our Lord *mediates?*

The blessed Lord works in us and for us, and when we speak of His mediation, His Merits, we are thinking of His work for us.

Our Lord died on the Cross, and because of this, His Sacrifice, we sinners *are* accepted.

I may feel puzzled sometimes to make it clear to myself why God required this. Perhaps these thoughts will help me.

1. Our Lord offers a perfect obedience, leading to death upon the Cross, and God looked down on Him and saw this offering.[1]

2. Our Lord represents the whole race of men.

3. Every one of us can share in this Sacrifice if we will take God at His word and take Christ as our Master. And this is a little of what is meant by our Lord's merits and His Mediation. He has made a perfect offering for the sins of the whole world, and I, yes I, can be saved by what Jesus Christ has done for me if only I will let Christ work in me. I must never forget Our Lord has work to do

1 *The Creed of the Christian*, "The Atonement," pp. 47, 54, from which this explanation is entirely taken.

in us, in *me*. I must become a part of Him, a living branch of the Vine which is Himself.

Well, I can throw myself entirely on what our Lord has done. His Blood will wash me, has washed me, it may be, already. He represents me as a member of His Body, the Church. My sins are many and great, but God will forgive them for Christ's Sake. All this is most true. The very worst sinner has only to throw himself at the foot of the Cross and lay the burden of his sins at Jesus' Feet.

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One," but do I think that Jesus Christ has borne all these things for me that *I may be let off sufferings?* Do I think I ought to find the Christian life easy?

Ah, no. Christ, indeed, died to bring us to God, but He also died and rose that we might live the life of Jesus and share His Sufferings. Now, do I fully believe and know that our Lord will not save any one *in his sins?* He will save us *from our sins*, and therefore that means that it is only the beginning of Christian life when any one humbly trusts in God and takes home to himself the blessed truth that Jesus died for him. Then, indeed, Our Lord asks for that forgiven sinner to give up himself wholly to the Lord Who bought him, that the Lord's Passion may be between that saved soul and its sins, and at the hour of death He is indeed between us and the Father, representing us, pleading for us, as our Mediator.

Let me pray God on my knees to deliver me from thinking that Jesus died for me that I might live as I pleased, and that all a sinner has to do is to say he "trusts in Jesus".

Trust in Jesus, indeed! Please God, I will trust in Him, in His Merits, for the pardon of all my sins and for the Gift of Life, the Gift of Holiness, but I must never, never forget He asks me for myself. And let me remember that He is

ever pleading His merits—what He did for us—now at this moment in Heaven. He pleads for us who are joined to Him, and in the Holy Communion we join with Him—all of us, priest and people alike—in praying God to accept us for His merits, because for what He did for us on Calvary.[1]

"Look, Father, look on His Anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For, lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord." (322.)

[1] I feel I must repeat my obligation to Canon Gore for his teaching on this point.

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service."

Text.—"He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (S. John xv. 5).

Faithful people.

The body of Christ, the Church, the household of God—that is what is meant by "faithful people". And I have to think to-day that it is only through God's power and mercy that the whole Church, and every member of it, is able to do Him service. First, then, I must never think that any *outward* change can make either the whole Church or a single person good unless God is working in the Church—in the person's heart.

I may be tempted to think about myself, that if only I had more money, or more time, or a different sort of home, I should find it easy to be good.

And I may hear sometimes of people who think that if only every one was well educated, crime and wickedness would be at an end.

And this is quite wrong. What does make us able to lead good lives—in other words, to do God service—is *union with Christ*. God dwelling in us and we in Him. These words speak of very high things, but surely I have learned a little what they mean. This prayer takes for granted that we who pray it are God's faithful people. That is, that we have bound our wills to God, that we are forgiven —that we use the (His) means of grace, and that *now* we want to serve Him.

Now, sometimes a Christian who wants to serve God may really be quite cast down by his failures, and say "I do no service". Then this prayer will help him. It is only God who can give any one the power to serve Him: it is God who works in us by the Holy Spirit. Last week I thought of the good things God gives us—well, this is the second good gift.

The first is forgiveness, the second is power to please, to serve God.

So to-day let me ask myself: Am I one of these "faithful"? It is not difficult to find an answer.

Next. How can I serve God to-day? There will be many, many opportunities. Perhaps I feel I have never used any, or at anyrate used them very little. But let me kneel down, and pray that God will show me more opportunities of serving Him during this day. Some one I can help, perhaps, only by a kind word; something I can do to please a friend, some bit of self-denial.

It is always well to look forward to the day that is before me. "Forewarned is forearmed." And if I pray God to let me serve Him, this watchfulness for service will keep me on my guard against sin.

I may feel I have hardly begun to lead a Christian Life. Then I can begin to-day. "Lord, I put myself into Thy Hands, forgive me, and help me to please Thee *to-day*."

Or I may have been trying a long time, and I may be weary. God will give me fresh courage. Only just let me remember that it is God Who alone gives me the gift of service; I can't work alone a minute. Let me once again pray to Him for power to begin to-day with fresh power; let me try to send up prayers to Him during the long hours.

"Now with the new-born day I give
Myself anew to Thee,
That as Thou willest I may live,
And what Thou willest be." (5.)

THOUGHT II.

"Do unto Thee true and laudable service."

Text.—"IF ANY MAN SERVE ME, LET HIM FOLLOW ME" (S. John xii. 26).

Another thought for to-day is—the Service we perform must be *true* service. What does that mean? It means I am not to please myself first. The text I have read shows me what our dear Lord asks. We are to follow Him. I was thinking last week of how God forgives us, not in order that we may just do what pleases ourselves, but in order to make us able to lead lives like Christ, because we are in Christ, and He in us. Now I can see if my service is *true*. Do I feel God's call first of all? In everything do I say: Is it *right* I should do this, or to go to that place, or whatever it may be? Do I try to put duty first? If so, I am truly serving God, even though I do fail very often. Sometimes I may be perplexed. It may be that two duties may seem to clash. For instance, I might want to go to Church and at the same time I might be really wanted at home. Well, God will show me. To obey His call is right, but to help one's mother or one's child is *sometimes* the way He wants us to serve Him. Let me see that if Church and

home seem to clash I do try to deny myself any pleasure and leisure time in order to go to Church. Let me try to be present at an early Eucharist, and if I have done that I may feel pretty sure that my *real* home duties must be done. It is very, very seldom that a person in a *town* is cut off from Church entirely, especially from an early Celebration. And I must always make up my mind that God means me to serve Him in the smallest things. It does not matter if I have very small things to do; let me do them for Him. It may be cleaning, sewing, teaching, serving in a shop, or anything. All can be done for Him. It is very hard to be like Christ when we work in the midst of people who do not serve Him. Ah, that is just what He wants.

He asks me to be pure, to be gentle, to be honest, to be kind in the midst of every sort of temptation. He lived in the midst of people, some bad, some good, so He asks me to live and to follow Him. To serve Him in the place where He has put me, that is what I have to do. If it is ever in a quiet home, it may be among children, oh how blessed I am. But if it is in the weary world, in the furnace of temptation, I am not less blessed—He gives me my place.

That is the life of a Christian; to try and put God's Service *first*. It does not follow that I shall not be very happy often. Very often I shall find it is my duty to enjoy myself very much. If I am going, for instance, on a day's pleasuring where it is *perfectly right* and good to go, then it is my duty just to be as merry and happy and serve Him by trying to turn away wrong jokes and stories, by helping my companions to keep away from temptation, by bearing any mischances cheerfully, but above all by *really enjoying* myself.

So it is with all the good things that rightly come to us. We serve God by our glad hearts, our thankfulness. We are to serve Him always—in all places, in joys, in sorrows.

So to-day let me pray that He will help me to put *right* first, what I *like* second.

"O happy band of pilgrims,
If onward ye will tread,
With Jesus as your Fellow,
To Jesus as your Head." (224.)

THOUGHT III.

"That Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service."

Text.—"IF ANY MAN SERVE ME, LET HIM FOLLOW ME" (S. John xii. 26).

Laudable. It is very strange to think that God is so good to us that He condescends to be pleased with our poor service. Laudable means praiseworthy. There is a word like it in the Communion service, in the Hymn which begins "Therefore with angels". The Priest says, "we laud and magnify"; that means, we praise His glorious Name.

So *laudable* service means: Service that *God* can praise. Ah! let me remember this. Not what man can praise. Our blessed Lord once told His disciples a parable of a King who left His servants talents to employ. To the one who did well the Master said at the last, "Well done, good and faithful servant".

What a wonderful thought! Perhaps even I may please God. Perhaps I have known what it is to please some one I love; perhaps I have won a smile or a word of praise from some one far above me. Well, if so, it is just a shadow of the joy of having pleased God. It is true that it is His gift that we are able to please Him at all, but none the less does He, as it were, smile on us, love us. But the service which will gain His Praise must be done entirely for Him. Do I understand this? It will not do if I do something to get credit with men. Of course, trying to please one's

nearest and dearest, one's mother perhaps, is indeed pleasing God; but trying to attract notice, to be praised, flattered, or to seek to get on in the world by doing some good action, is not the sort of service which pleases God.

It sometimes happens that one does gain the approval of good people for what one has done; if one has been trying to put God *first*, if one has done one's duty for His sake, then one may take any thanks, any praise, as part of His goodness, as something sent to cheer one.

And is it not very cheering to think that I am really noticed, encouraged by God? All I do, all I bear for Him may be quite unknown to the world; I may always have to work on without notice; I shall never probably do anything the world counts as wonderful.

But all the time My Father is watching my struggles, my work, my sufferings. He knows what it costs me to give up some pleasure that might lead me into sin. He sees some act of self-denial. He knows how hard it is to get up in time to say my prayers, to make my Communion. And perhaps I think how bad I am, how much I fail, how little I answer to His Grace? Well, it is all true, and yet He is such a loving Father He will, when it is all over and I come to Him trembling, and yet knowing my Lord Jesus has saved me, He will say "Well done".

Oh, ought not this to make one very glad? It is not enough to escape being lost for ever. Surely I shall feel that I can never, never try hard enough to please Him. Let me pray to-day that I may feel all the time His Eye is on me, and that He is pleased when I try to be kind, when I resist temptation, when I pray to Him.

"While I do my duty,
Struggling through the tide,
Whisper Thou of beauty
On the other side.

Tell me not the story
Of this world's distress,
O the future glory,
O the loveliness."[1]

THOUGHT IV.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy Heavenly Promises."

Text.—"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE THE CROWN OF LIFE" (Rev. ii. 10).

The thought to-day is of what is called *Perseverance*. And also the words remind me that it is on this life that our life in the world to come depends *as far as we know*.

Service, faithfully serving God. I thought of *true* service, and of *laudable* service, and these thoughts will help me to understand what faithfully serving God means. It means (let me be quite sure I have taken this home to myself), it means serving God with all my heart, putting God first, not my own pleasure or my own supposed advantage. Being faithful. Not afraid to stand up for Jesus; not afraid to say a thing is wrong when I know it *is* wrong; not afraid to own that I am a Christian; not afraid to say my Prayers, or go to Communion, or to use Confession, if I find I ought to use it. It means being honest, careful not to cheat any one; it means perfect purity in mind and body; it means most of all a loving heart, showing itself in loving deeds. And this is to go on all the days of my life. I must not grow tired. There is a lovely hymn which I should do well to say at Communion time (322)—a line of which says: "And crown Thy Gifts with strength to persevere". That means that the power to *go on* trying is as it were the last

[1] From the Hymn-book of S. Mary Magdalene, Munster Square.

of God's Gifts (not the greatest, for He has told us Love is the greatest), but the last, the finishing touch to His work in our souls. I *must* not allow myself to get tired. It is so sad to see how sometimes people who have seemed to do quite well, to be really trying as long as a friend on whom they leaned was with them, have at once dropped their Communions, their efforts to be good, when the friend was away. There is a text in the Bible which speaks of some people's goodness being like the morning cloud and the early dew, dried up by the hot noonday sun.[1] Now, how *can* I go on to persevere? Simply by earnest prayer, by never letting my prayers be left out of my day. Sometimes—please God, not very often—it may happen that I am kept by ill-health or distance from a Church, from very frequent Communion. Now this may not always be my fault. But if I go on without praying morning and night, I may indeed be frightened. And if months are allowed to slip away and I have not drawn near to my Lord's Heavenly Feast, again I must fear. And if I find I can do things which I once thought wrong, again I must fear. But if I can feel day by day that I do pray, I do try to be faithful, that I do go to Holy Communion, that I am *more* particular with myself, not *less*, as time goes on, then I can humbly hope God is giving me the gift of Perseverance in His Service. And as years pass away, and I find He has been always with me, I may humbly hope that He will be with me unto the end. That I shall be faithful. To be an *un*faithful servant does not mean that I have never failed, there may be days when I shall feel I have been most unfaithful, most untrue to God. Perhaps I lose my temper very badly, or do some wrong action. But that does not mean that at the last I shall be found not to have served God faithfully.

[1] Hosea xiii. 3.

What *does* it mean then—not to serve God faithfully? It means to leave off trying. It means that the unfaithful servant has given in, and said "it is no use, I shall not try any more".

Oh, if ever I have fallen, or should fall into this state, let me always pray God for forgiveness, and power to begin again. Let me remember, and help others to remember, that nothing will kill souls except leaving off trying.

"In the hour of trial,
Jesus pray for me,
Lest by base denial,
I depart from Thee.
When Thou seest me waver,
With a look recall,
Nor for fear or favour,
Suffer me to fall."[1]

Thought V.

"That we fail not finally to attain Thy Heavenly Promises."

Text.—"Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left us of entering into His Rest, any of you should seem to have come short of it" (Heb. iv. 1).

Failure. I know what this means. It is surely not coming up to what we meant to come to. Not reaching out as far as we meant.

What is it for which we long? People often set before them some object, which they mean to possess, some success they mean to win.

A person means to try to become a Member of Parliament, and of him we say, he wins or fails to win his desire.

[1] Taken from the *Armoury of Prayer*.

As one goes through life there will be many, many things that one will long to win. A better place, or more money, a wife, a home, a prize, and these may be quite lawful for us, only we *may* fail. God may send us some disappointment.

But there is one great object, one great desire we should set before us. The Service of God. Then we cannot fail in coming up to, in attaining His Promises. What has He promised? So much—Eternal life, the Sight of God, perfect Joy, rest, freedom from sin. How terrible to fall short. Let the prayer of to-day show us that we may come short of what God means us to be.

It is possible, I suppose, that one might come short of all God meant us to be without actually being lost.

But the prayer to-day speaks of *real* failure, of not attaining His Promises.

How terrible. It is possible, our Lord has said, in very, very solemn, very stern words, to *fail*.

And as I saw yesterday, the only sure way not to fail, is to be on one's guard. Never to give up trying.

And, again, let me learn carefully to see how very, very differently God's estimation of success or failure is from the world's. Our Lord tells a parable of a rich man who laid up much riches, who had been very successful indeed in making money. What was said to him? "Thou fool, this night is thy *soul* required of thee" (S. Luke xii. 20). He had not thought of his soul, and so he was a failure.

And I—I might get on, get into a better position, be rather more thought of by my neighbours, and yet, all the while fail to make my life a *success*, because I have left God to take the second, or the third, or no place at all in my life. If I put God first, then indeed all the blessings of my life, more money, a happy home, more nice things in the home, will all be sent by God, and He will help me to use

them for Him, and to part with them when He calls, but if I put getting them first of all, then I am running an awful risk of not attaining His Promises.

Let me pray to-day before I go out that He will not let me come short of what He means me to be. Let me not, O Lord, for the sake of anything this world can give, fail to attain Thy Promises.

This sort of failure is so apt to overtake me if I am by God's mercy leading a life sheltered from great temptations, and with a good many comforts. Let me watch myself *very* closely if ever this should be my lot.

One might fail through not being quickly ready to give up anything for which He called, like the rich young man who made that great refusal when our Lord asked him to sell all he had and to follow Him. Just because he was good and had kept the commandments, our Lord asked him for something higher, and he failed (S. Mark xvii. 23). Well, I can only trust that He will give me grace to go on and not fail,—not come short.

"Here faith is ours, and heavenly hope
And grace to lead us higher;
But there are perfectness and peace,
Beyond our best desire.
Oh, by Thy love and anguish, Lord,
And by Thy life laid down,
Grant that we fall not from Thy grace,
Nor cast away our crown." Amen. (229.)

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope and charity; and, that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of Faith."

Text.—"Thy Faith hath made thee whole" (S. Luke xvii. 19). (From this week's Gospel.)

Faith, Hope, Charity.

I am to think this week on three great marks of a Christian, three great *virtues*—that is, good qualities.

These three are known as the Three Virtues.

And to-day let me think of Faith.

Faith is a Gift from God through His Holy Spirit. It is a gift given to our souls by which we believe in what we cannot *see*. As yet we cannot *see* God, but by this gift we believe in God and in all He has made known to us through Jesus Christ.

When did God first give me this power? In Holy Baptism He planted the seed of Faith, and as I grow up He means me to realise, to take home to myself, all I have learned about our Father, about our Lord Jesus, about the Holy Spirit.

I must try to take in one or two things about Faith.

1. As I grow older I may hear people who have no Faith in God at all say "Faith is contrary to reason". That is not true. Faith is contrary to *seeing*, to *sight*. We believe in Him Who is invisible—that means, *not seen*. But, indeed, I may believe, for it is quite true, and any person who knows history can tell me that the cleverest men, men like that great Mr. Gladstone of whom I have often heard, have had this great gift of Faith in God.

2. I must remember Faith must be a *living* Faith. I must let my Faith be shown by my life. If I believe in my Father in Heaven I shall love to pray to Him, to try to please Him. My Faith will make me love and hope.

3. Next, Faith will grow, but I will think of that later.

4. Faith is the power in me which helps me to make use of God's Grace of Forgiveness. Our Lord was once in a crowd of people, and just *one* woman believed He could heal her, and she alone was healed.[1] So if I come humbly to Holy Communion and believe, faintly and feebly at first, it may be, that our Lord will feed me, I shall be fed.

But unless there is this Faith in our souls, Holy Communion and all other good gifts will not heal us or do us good.

And it is Faith which makes me able to feel "Jesus has died for me" I, by God's mercy, know my need, and know that Jesus Christ has died, and therefore I can kneel at the Cross of Christ by Faith and *know* that His Blood cleanseth me from all sin.

All the words of the hymn I am going to read should be true of me.

"E'er since by *faith* I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die." (633.)

[1] *Creed of a Christian*, p. 81.

Thought II.

"Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of Faith."

Text.—"Lord, increase our Faith" (S. Luke xvii. 5).

And now I see what is meant by the Prayer: Give unto us the "increase" of Faith.

I want, if I am a Christian, to go on from strength to strength, from "faith to faith".

Christians have different experiences.

1. There is that blessed life which some of us know or have seen in others.

A child baptised very soon after its birth, growing up in a good home, taught to pray, taught to fight against its little sins of temper and so on, for Jesus' Sake. Growing up, receiving fresh strength in Confirmation, and then realising perhaps at a first Communion, or in a first Confession, or in some great joy or sorrow, that our Lord has died for him or her, and so starting afresh with new vigour, new love, and going on from grace to grace. Now in that happy life there are of course frequent falls, and it is the sense of these falls which makes the child by degrees learn its need of a Saviour. But there has been no need for an *entirely* fresh beginning, because all the life has been made up of continual "fresh springs" in God. Oh, that is so blessed! If ever I have any children, shall I not try to train them in this life of Faith?

2. And there is the other sort of experience, alas! too common. When the promises of Holy Baptism have been forgotten, or never known, and perhaps even after Confirmation and Communion the Christian has gone away into the wilderness of sin. Or it may be a man or woman is taught to know about God and sin and a Saviour

and has never been baptised. In these cases Conversion, an utter and entire change, is needful. A turning right round to God; and for those who have ever known Him and have gone astray deep repentance for misused grace; for those who are just beginning, who have just received their New Birth, repentance also is needful—in all Faith—to accept God's free Forgiveness.

But this power to lay hold of God's Forgiveness, and be forgiven, is just only the beginning.

Now, whichever case is mine, whether I am one of those who have been His servants from childhood, or if I have been turned from a life of sin, let me remember I must pray "increase my faith".

First, let me believe in Jesus as my Saviour, but then let me pray that I may go to lead the life of a Christian, the life of Faith. That is, one who rules his or her life by the unseen. If more and more I put God first; if more and more I find I love to pray; if more and more I try to please God by being kind, forgiving, pure, gentle, honest, true, then I *am* living the life of Faith. And God is so good He *will* increase this Faith, He will not let me be shaken by troubles, by words I hear spoken against that which I believe, by sickness, by wickedness in others, or by my own failures. And He will give me Faith to do something for Him. Day by day something for Him. Do I not see how those who go out to foreign lands need Faith? Those who work at home need it also. Well, He will give me some day Faith enough to make a real venture.

It is strong Faith which makes one bold enough to stand up for Jesus, or to leave home for Jesus, and finally to face death bravely because Jesus is with His Servants always, even to the end. All this Faith God will give me, as I saw in the thoughts on prayer, if I will ask Him, and *not be in a hurry*.

"O for a faith that will not shrink
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe;

"That will not murmur or complain
Beneath the chastening rod;
But in the hour of grief or pain
Can lean upon its God;

"A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt;

"A faith that keeps the narrow way
Till life's last spark is fled,
And with a pure and heavenly ray
Lights up the dying bed.

"Lord, give me such a faith as this,
And then, whate'er may come,
I taste e'en now the hallow'd bliss
Of an eternal home." Amen. (278.)

THOUGHT III.

"Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of Hope."

Text.—"LET US REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD" (Rom. v. 2).

Next comes Hope. Perhaps I have never thought of Hope as a virtue, a part of Christian goodness before. Hope means looking forward trustfully, and it springs from Faith. I suppose if I am trying to look forward to the things which are unseen, I shall learn more and more the blessedness of Hope.

How can I make this a part of my life?

1. I will try, please God, to look always on the bright side

of things. I will try to *hope* things will turn out for the best. Then I will always try to put before me all that God promises, and I will hope that much will be given me. Of some blessings we are quite certain. The gift of Faith makes us certain of life everlasting being ours, if we fail not. Ah, then comes in Hope. Fail!—no, I hope indeed that God helping me I shall *not* fail.

Then I will try and hope for other people.

If I am ever called on to work, or care for others' souls, the God-given blessing of Hope must come into my soul. I must always *hope* and pray the very best for others. Perhaps I may have to watch over children, perhaps I may have to teach them of holy things, perhaps I may long that they should always lead the life of Faith. Then I *must* Hope. There must be always disappointments. I may take great pains, and yet it seems as if all my care, all my lessons, all my trouble, were just thrown away. But I must not get sad or discouraged. Again, I must hope against hope. People for whose souls we care will often disappoint us. And again we must always hope that people are better than they sometimes seem to be. Perhaps a friend seems to be unkind or cold. It is a great thing to call in Hope. And for myself. How weary I am sometimes of the fight with sin, how tired of my life. Still let me look on with hope. I have not perhaps much to hope for in this life—but beyond. It is just because God has seen it to be best for us to know so little of the life beyond that we may hope for so much. It is well to think sometimes of all that hope of everlasting life means. It means that in the life beyond we may *hope* for perfect sinlessness, for a blessed meeting with those we love, for rest, for a clearing up of puzzles, for, oh, so much more than we can understand. And let me pray for Hope—Hope to make me cheery about the daily troubles of this life. Hope about all the people for whom I care. Hope for myself. Hope for the life beyond.

"Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine
My path of life attend,
Thy presence through my journey shine
And crown my journey's end." (515.)

THOUGHT IV.

"Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of Love [Charity]."

Texts.– "LOVE IS OF GOD. . . . HE THAT LOVETH NOT KNOWETH NOT GOD, FOR GOD IS LOVE" (1 S. John iv. 7 and 8).

"WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD?" (Rom. viii. 35).

A very holy man has said, "Every grace is Love". I have been taught before about Love. On the Sunday just before Lent, the Collect and Epistle teach what Love is, and of its great value.

And it is well to stop and ask myself "Am I growing in Love, as I said I ought to be growing in Faith and Hope?" The Love of God. How wonderful that is, and yet how little I respond to it. The test is—Not, do I *feel* much, but am I trying in all things to obey the Commandments God has given me? Then by degrees I shall get to understand the Love of God. God has told me in His Holy Word that His children are to love one another. Is there anything of this love in my life?

Am I at all trying to be *kind* to others? Do I put myself out for another person? There are many, many ways in which the whole world could be changed if the Law of Love were obeyed. For instance, it may be I am one of a household. Do I ever do anything to help some one else who may be under me? For instance, would I do some one

else's work for an hour or more to let that some one else go to Holy Communion? Or I live with a number of people all round me. Do I ever do some act like the one mentioned? Do I see I could make it possible for a weary woman, a hard-worked girl, to go to Church? Do I care for other people's souls?

Again, if I live among other people—either among people who are my fellow-workers, or my next-door neighbours—do I try to think of the Law of Love as regards my talk? Do I gossip, do I tell a person what some one else has said of him or her? Do I carry idle tales? Do I discuss or argue about religion?

Oh, there is nothing which the Law of Love is so much broken in as by religious arguments.

Do I allow myself to sulk, to be jealous, because some one else is noticed or given a bit of work I should like?

Is there any one to whom I will not speak?

Now, these are ways in which Christians who go to Holy Communion break Christ's Law of Love, and often hardly think they are doing wrong. Oh, let me to-day look on and see if through the long hours of the coming day I shall be tempted to any of these. How can I resist? Only by the Love of Christ. S. Paul says in one of his letters "The Love of Christ constraineth us," that is, compels us. And can I, to whom God has forgiven so much, can I be unkind to any one for whom Christ died? Can I, for whom Jesus cares so much, care not at all for those whom He bought? Supposing I had a dear brother who had gone away to Australia, and who yet was very good to me, and showed his love in various ways, supposing this brother sent me a letter to tell me a friend, for whom he cared very much, was coming to the place where I lived, and would I be kind to the friend for my brother's sake? How eager I should be to see the friend and help him. Ah, our Lord is out of

sight, but He sends us those for whom He cares, the people among whom we live, first of all, and then by degrees others further away, and He says, "This is my Commandment that ye love one another". And how is this Law to be kept? By following out the rules He gave us. It may be that we sometimes have to see our brothers and sisters punished for their own good. A man who steals or assaults must be punished. None the less is he our brother, to be prayed for and cared for. But what I am mostly thinking of to-day is the Law of Love carried out in daily life amongst my closest companions. God will help me, if I ask Him, to be loving for His sake, to love in *deed* all for whom Christ died, to show I love God by my daily life, in the very smallest things.

And then I shall grow to love God. Yes, by degrees I shall find, as others find, how real Christ's love is, how true it is that nothing can separate me from Him. Others have known this, and I will pray and lead the life of Love so that I may come to know it.

"O Love Divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee?
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of Redeeming Love,
The Love of Christ to me." (195.)

Thought V.

"And, that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command."

Texts.—"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22-23). (Epistle for this Sunday.)

"HOLINESS, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD" (Heb. xii. 14).

Do I really take home to myself that what God expects of every redeemed soul is what the text I have just read says—"Sanctification," that is, Holiness? And what is it to be sanctified? It means to be set apart, dedicated to God. And the first text tells me what is the sort of character a "sanctified" person has to build up.

The fruits of the Spirit.

Yes, for God the Holy Ghost *sanctifies me* and all the elect people of God—that is, the people chosen to serve God in His family.

Am I ever tempted to think that if I say I trust in Christ's precious Blood, or "I believe Jesus has died for me," that that is enough? Let me get rid of this thought. It is a most blessed truth that Jesus *has* died, and if I have Faith, for which I pray this week, He will give me His grace of Pardon. But as I've seen before, I must give myself up to Him, that He may work in me by the Holy Ghost, and by degrees help me to show Love and Joy and all the other fruits. Our Lord says in S. John xv. that we His branches must bear much fruit.

This week's Gospel seems to teach that while ten lepers received the cleansing which made it possible to lead a new life, only one answered by his thankfulness to the call, and, we may suppose, went on to lead a really new life.

And, indeed, as the Collect says, we must love what God commands if we want ever to obtain, to have for our own, what He promises. For unless Jesus Christ is by degrees building up in me a loving, pure, gentle character, can I think that I shall be fit for God's promised Joys? We cannot tell what God may have in store for those who have had no chance in this life, but for me, what can I say as an excuse? What can I plead? "Lord, I knew I ought to

try, I was told to be pure, and I gave way to all sorts of evil; I was told to be loving, and I was angry, cross, unkind, spiteful, but I trusted it would come all right."

And then I, with a hard, impure, or deceitful character, expect to enjoy the wonderful promises of God!

If I have set myself to learn of Jesus to be loving, to be pure, to be kind, however little I know, however little I have succeeded, I may be sure God will continue His Work. After Death what wonderful quick growths there may be. But how will it be with everything to unlearn, to come into His Presence cold, hard, with no love, no thankfulness, no marks of the Cross, which, as S. Paul tells me in this week's Epistle, is the mark of being Christ's?

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" (put it to death), that is, the old nature, with all wicked desires and sins. Let me pray God with all my heart to make me *love* His Rule, which, after all, will grow to be so easy. Indeed, it is true that in time to serve God, to live the Life of Christ in us, is Joy and Peace. I may sometimes see a face on which is stamped the Peace of God.

No one who has gained that Peace but would tell me that to serve God is Joy, that all of us who are trying will in time grow to love His Commandments. And what He promises is greater than anything we can conceive.

"O hide this self from me, that I
No more, but Christ in me may live:
My vile affections crucify,
Nor let one hidden lust survive.
In all things nothing may I see,
Nothing desire, apart from Thee." (600.)

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy: and because the frailty of man, without Thee, cannot but fall, keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable for our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy."

Text.—"Fellow citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God, being built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. ii. 19-20.)

I think the prayer of to-day is meant to raise my thoughts from my own wants, my own sins, to the thought of the great Family to which I belong—the Church of God. That is His Household, for God gives us His Gifts as members of His Church.

For I can understand this if I think what it means to be one member of a *State*, say England.

Because I am English, a subject of the King, I have certain rights, certain privileges.

And so it is God wills that all Christians should have *their* privileges because they are members of His Kingdom of Heaven, or, as it is called, His Church, and also, as it

were, with a more intimate name, Christ's Body, of which each Christian is a member, a part.

We are taught about the Church in so many ways. Sometimes our Lord speaks of it as His Kingdom, over which He rules, again He speaks of Himself as a Vine of which we His Members are Branches. S. Paul tells us that Christ is the Head of the Body, which is the Church. And also S. Paul tells us we are, as it were, a great building made up of stones, resting on the Apostles and Prophets, and our Lord Himself is the Chief Corner Stone.

Now all this should teach me more and more what a blessing it is to be a Member of Christ's Holy Church.

For, as one of this great household, I have such wonderful blessings. First, I have brothers and sisters everywhere. There is a text which speaks of this, "He setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. lxviii. 6). Do I feel this? Whenever I come into Church, especially to that most blessed Service of the Holy Eucharist, I am no longer alone. My brethren, living and departed, are around me, and our fellowship, our oneness, is with God. That is a great thought for to-day. I may sometimes be very lonely. I may have no one in my home who cares for Holy Things, or I may have no real home, or I may be in great sorrow. But—I have brothers and sisters all over the world. Yes, and they pray for *me*. I have that fellowship, that oneness with God, with our Lord. I may come and receive wonderful Gifts. Ah, yes, "The Church is the Household of God," because in it God, the Holy Ghost, conveys to us the Gifts of Christ.[1] I will try to think of these Gifts to-morrow, for to-day let me try to take home to myself this truth that God does care for each one of us, and also that He wishes *each one* of us to be *not alone* in our Christian life, but members of a Family, branches of a Vine, living stones of a

[1] See *Creed of a Christian*, p. 75.

building, subjects of a Heavenly Kingdom, a Heavenly City, of which some of the members are on earth, some in Paradise.

So let me pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and pray that He will lift me up to understand the blessings and gifts which come to me through the Church.

"The Church's one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From Heaven He came and sought her
To be His Holy Bride;
With His own Blood He bought her,
And for her life He died." (215.)

THOUGHT II.

"Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy."

Texts.—"THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY" (Eph. i. 22).

"OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST" (1 S. John i. 3).

I thought yesterday that the Church is my home, because in it and through it God gives great Gifts, and because we in the Church are one with our Lord.

The Gifts. Yes, all sorts of Gifts for all my life.

The beginning of Christian life in Holy Baptism, the *Confirming*, that is, *strengthening* Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, in which *each* Christian is made a King and a Priest unto God, and then just as we need regular food for our bodies, so we need food for our souls, and in Holy Communion we are fed with the Body and Blood of Jesus under the forms of Bread and Wine.

But more than this. Day by day we feel our sins, so there is *daily* forgiveness. Or a Christian soul may fall into deadly sin. And there is the gift of restoration. We can come back and confess our sins either alone with God or in the presence of His Minister (and certainly after a fall into deadly sin this is the safest course), and receive the message of Absolution all for ourselves alone, and we are welcomed back.

And when the blessing of marriage is given to any one, the Church blesses this union, and makes Holy Marriage a real Sacrament—that is, the outward sign of an inward grace.

And Sickness falls on us, and the Church is ready with words of comfort and counsel, and when the last moment comes the Church through her minister will offer the departing soul to God, and lay the tired body in the grave.

And if one among us wishes to take upon himself the holy office of a minister of God, the Church gives him his office.

And if men or women wish (whether they are rich or poor) to give their lives to Christ, and to live apart for Him, the Church is ready to accept them. And so on and much more. And these gifts come to us, come to *me* in very simple ways. "God gives the highest gifts through the simplest channels." Because we have bodies and souls God gives us *gifts* for *our* soul by means of our *bodies*.

But all these gifts mean that I who receive so many of them *must* use them, and care for others that they may be brought to use them.

And also I must pray much for the whole Church. That is really the thought of this week's prayer. "His perpetual mercy." That is, His everlasting pity and kindness.

Oh, if God took away His mercy from the Church what would happen? But He does keep the Church. The

Church is quite different from what our Lord means her to be. She is so broken up and divided; but still God guides us. Still the Holy Spirit is in her. I ought to think of our own branch of the Church. How good God has been to us in England and to our Sister Churches in America and Scotland and Ireland.

Terrible troubles threaten us often, our own sins and shortcomings are terribly grievous, but I must never doubt God is in our Church. We have the Ministry, the Word of God, the Sacraments, and He is daily adding to the Church many, many souls. Let me pray this prayer with all my heart and try to be a living member of His Church into which I was baptised, my Mother of whom I was born to God.

Each of us by our lives is either helping or hindering the Church's work of building up a holy temple to God. Which am I doing?

"Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore opprest,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distrest,
Yet Saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

"'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

"Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet Communion
With those whose rest is won;
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee." Amen. (215.)

THOUGHT III.

"And because the frailty of man, without Thee, cannot but fall."

Text.—"O HOLD THOU UP MY GOINGS IN THY PATHS, THAT MY FOOTSTEPS SLIP NOT" (Ps. xvii. 4).

I have been thinking of the Church. That is God's family made up of *all* baptised people.

And therefore as the Church of God is made up of weak sinful men and women, she needs God's help.

Frailty, that is, weakness. One often hears of an old person being *frail*, that is, he totters, is not able to walk firmly. Now, I must try and take home to myself how weak I am—how weak every one is without God. I must learn to lean only upon God. It may be that I shall have by and by some work to do for God. I may help in a Sunday School, in a Working Party, in the G.F.S., or even in greater things. Well, I must try in these things to remember that nothing can prosper unless God helps us. No plans, however well made, will do any good unless these plans are prayed over and God helps us. We are all frail, that is, *weak*, in running the race which I thought of a week ago. So I must be careful, especially in the things which *seem* as if they were done for God and His Church, that it is really His will I am trying to do.

If Christians always prayed over their plans, always tried to remember their own weakness, always put God's Glory first, there would not be so much jealousy, so much offence given and taken among Christians who are doing work for God.

Perhaps in helping in a Club, or a School, or an Entertainment, I might remember how "frail" we are. This is the only hope for the whole Church—that God will help her. She is made up of weak members, and if I ever read history I shall see from the very beginning how the *frailty* of man has hindered God's Work. Apostles disputed even in the days of the early Church, and as time went on, how the work of God was hindered by the weakness of weak Christians.

This may help me sometimes if God were pleased to send me such a trial as being disappointed in some one to whom I had looked up. This is a very hard trial, and, mercifully, there are so many good people around me, I may never have it to bear. But every now and then one finds in a person whom one respects faults one never suspected, or worse—a guide, an adviser, may fall away, or seem to fall away, from the Faith, from Holiness. Please God, this may never happen, but if it has happened or ever does happen, let me remember what I have been told, that without Christ, apart from Christ, *we must fall.* These sort of trials are meant to make us who are called to bear them trust more to God, less to man. Not to make us hard, or inclined to give up trying or trusting people, but to make us feel that God alone is strong, is Holy, and that *He* never fails. And, oh, as I go on in the Christian life, let me pray God to make me strong by His Strength, so that I by my frailty may never hurt one of the little ones, and also let me pray daily that He will be in and with His Church always and for ever.

"Our weakness strengthen and confirm,
For, Lord, Thou know'st us frail,
That neither devil, world, nor flesh
Against us may prevail." (508.)

Thought IV.

"Keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful."

Texts.—"Be not therefore anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (S. Matt. vi. 34).

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (S. John xvii. 15).

It is possible that the thoughts about frailty may have made me feel troubled.

If so, here is a text from the Gospel for this week to cheer me.

Our Lord has been telling us in this part of His Sermon on the Mount that His servants are to be very much like birds, in the way we act about what is coming—the future.

We are to be careful and take reasonable care, just as a bird which builds its nest and provides for its young is careful, but then—we are not to fret and worry. And this is the lesson of this week's collect. The whole Prayer breathes this spirit of trust.

God will help His Church *just* because we are frail. We pray Him to keep us from things that may hurt us. Our Lord does *not* promise that we shall not suffer trouble if we put our trust in God. No, but He tells us to bear each day's cross, and not to worry about what may never happen. So it is not against troubles we are praying—troubles often

are good—but things which will hurt us. What things will hurt?

I am praying for the whole Church. What hurts the Church most? Not the wickedness and unbelief of people outside the Church, but the selfishness, the sinful lives, the cowardice, the wordliness of Christians, of communicants. It has been said by a great teacher, "What we want is not *more* Christians but *better* Christians". Let me pray God that I may take this home to myself. What hurts the Church? What hurts the work of Jesus in a parish, a Girls' or Boys' Club, a Mothers' Meeting, a Church Choir, a Communicants' Guild? Is it not that the people who belong to them are often ill-tempered, proud, self-indulgent, jealous, eager to get the best places, the most notice? O let me to see to it that I try to bring home to myself how *these* things hinder God's kingdom spreading. If I ever am in any business let me see to it that I do nothing to bring dishonour on Christ by *any* cheating. If I have anything to do with others in my work, in a Club, in the G.F.S., let me try more than I have done to be on Christ's side.

Another thing that hurts the Church is all the unhappy divisions among Christians. Our Lord, in the seventeenth chapter of S. John, just before His Passion, prayed that His Church might be One. How does He feel when He sees His body the Church broken by divisions? What *can I* do? This much—I can pray. Every Sunday I might make it a rule to say this prayer: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Who saidst to Thine Apostles, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you,' regard not our sins but the faith of Thy Church, and grant her that peace and unity which are according to Thy Will; who livest and reignest God for ever and ever. Amen." Then I must try never to join in religious arguments. If someone comes and says,

"Will you tell me what you have been taught about the Church and the Bible or the Sacraments?" if I know anything I may thankfully help that person.

But never, never must I argue. If anyone says something against the Bible, the Church, some particular bit of Church teaching, *silence* is best.

I probably am not a learned person, and I may do more harm than good. It is far best to say: "I can't *argue*, but if you would read *The Christian's Manual* or *What I should Believe*, by Mr. Bathe, or *The Creed of a Christian*, by Bishop Gore, you would see what I *believe*". Again, I must not run after services outside my own Branch of the Church.

God has put me in the Church of England, or in a Sister Church. Let me be thankful for all He has given me, and not run after services outside my own Church.

And let me pray for all Christians very, very much in my own words, as well as in that Prayer I have just read, that in His time God will make His Church Holy and Undivided.

"O Trinity in Unity
One only God, in Persons Three,
Dwell ever in our hearts; like Thee
May we be One." (275.)

Thought V.

"And lead us to all things profitable for our Salvation."

Text.—"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the Wells of Salvation" (Isa. xii. 8).

Our Salvation. I thank God Who has called me to this state of Salvation. What do I mean by Salvation? I suppose it means a state of "being saved". That state in which we are *if* we are *in* Christ. "If ye abide in Me and

I in you," said our Lord. That state in which *I* ought to be, a Baptised, Confirmed Communicant, trying day by day to fight against sin, to use the Grace God gives me. That is the *state* of all faithful Christians in the Church who are living Branches of the Vine. And the question to ask about *any* Branch of the Church is—Are its members really followers of Jesus Christ? Is it a living Branch?

And if I look round on my own Church of England I can only thankfully feel that the Holy Spirit is working in her. That in the Church, and through the Church, souls are being brought to Christ. Therefore to-day let me pray earnestly that God will give the Church and each member of the Church what is good, what will help on salvation. God knows what will be good. And it may not be just what seems best—success in the world, praise, ease. No, it may mean just the opposite. But I can see what will certainly be good. I thought of *unity* yesterday. I can pray for a more loving spirit among Christians, and especially for Christians of the part of the Church to which I belong. And I should pray for my *own* little part, "the place in which I live, the Church to which I go, the clergy who minister to me". For although I ought to think of the whole Church, I must also think of my own special corner of the Church. If I, if every one tried to make his or her little corner better than it is now, how the Kingdom of Christ would spread. Can I? I may belong to some Guild, or Club, or a Branch of the G.F.S. Do I pray that God will send *us* who belong to that Club or Guild, or whatever it is, what we need for our Salvation? Certainly a spirit of love, of kindness, is one of these profitable things. Do I *wish* and pray that every one who is my fellow-member may be in a state of salvation? I should pray, I should strive that anything like jealousy, quarrelling, touchiness, may be put away from us. And I must try

sometimes to look out beyond that corner of the Church in which I am placed, and when I pray a prayer such as this week's Collect I should think of the whole Church. That God would give to all His people what they need to lead them in the Way of Salvation. It may be that if all of us Christians prayed much more we should see a wonderful outpouring of God the Holy Ghost, that there would be more love, more self-denial, more prayerfulness amongst us all.

The text at the beginning of these thoughts tells me after all what is that Gift; it is the Living Water, the Gift of the Holy Spirit. If He is outpoured on each of us, and on the Church as a whole, we shall indeed be in the Way of Salvation.

"We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill." (190.)

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succour, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church."

Text.—"The Love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19). (Part of Epistle.)

I am again to think this week not so much of my *own* special needs or sins, but of the whole family of God—the Church.

I pray for all Christians, "the whole of Christ's Body".

Have I ever thought that a large portion of that family is out of sight? In Paradise? In the state into which the soul passes after death?

We do not know much about that state. But in this waiting state we believe we shall be taught and cleansed, as we believe those whom we love and who have gone before us in the faith of Christ into that Silent Land are being taught and cleansed. Therefore for that part of Christ's Body who are out of sight we may pray a very lovely prayer in the one so much used: "Eternal Rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual Light shine upon them". And this is most comforting. For even the

holiest Christian dies imperfect, and how many, many people die knowing so little of God, with so much to learn. We know, too, from the fourth chapter of the second Epistle of S. Peter how the Gospel was preached even to the dead. Those who were members of our Lord's Body on earth we may be sure are equally so in Paradise.

"His continual Pity." God our Father never ceases to care for His children, and the text for to-day tells me of that Love of Christ which no one fully knows.

But what do we ask to-day? That He will *cleanse* His Church.

We pray He will cast out all sin. Do I ever think how the sins of the Church grieve our Lord?

He gave Himself for her. What does He see? A divided Church. Members of Christ tearing and rending each other. Communicants who kneel at the same altar quarrelling. Christians who are full of envy. Christians who cheat each other. And do not let me think this has nothing to do with me. If I, in that little corner of which I thought yesterday, am in any way bringing dishonour on the Name of Christ, I am doing my share in making His Church *unholy*. Let us pray He will cleanse us by His Precious Blood. But there is such a thing as cleansing by *fire*. What does that mean? It means God's Judgments. He may see that He *must* send to either a whole Church, or to some one Christian, the cleansing fire of a great trouble. And let me remember I pray for the departed also. They, we hope, are *cleansed*. Perhaps their cleansing may bring *pain*. If so, how gladly they will welcome it.[1] For in that waiting state the Soul will *know* God's Goodness and its own sin. And on earth God cleanses His Church in various ways. Sometimes a Church has to bear per-

[1] There is a most beautiful poem by Cardinal Newman called the "Dream of Gerontius," which brings out this thought of *Joy* in Pain.

secution. It happens even now-a-days that Christians who come out of heathen darkness are badly persecuted. We read of these things in Africa. And in the early days it often happened. Then it was easily seen who were real and who were only make-believe Christians. Well, that may not happen to our Church as a whole, but we may have each to bear something for Jesus Christ. These trials are to cleanse us as a Church and as Christians one by one. They are meant to purify, to, as it were, *burn* away all pretences, all sham and make-believe religion.

Let me now pray that God will mercifully cleanse me, cleanse the Church, that in the day when we shall see Him we may not be ashamed. Let me feel that the one thing which alone can harm my soul or the Church as a whole, or the little corner of that Church to which I belong, is *Sin*.

"Fountain of Goodness, Jesu, Lord and God,
Cleanse us unclean with Thy most Precious Blood,
Increase our faith and love that we may know
The hope and peace which from Thy Presence flow."
(312.)

Thought II.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church."

Texts.—"Upon this rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (S. Matt. xvi. 18).

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (S. Matt. xxviii. 20).

Our Lord cleanses us: that is, He applies to each Christian and to the whole Church His most precious Blood, and also He sends fiery trials to *burn* out sin. Such

a fire as Persecution I saw yesterday. But He is very merciful also, and in spite of all our sins He says that the gates of Hades—that is, of the kingdom of death and darkness—shall not overcome the family of God.

Let me take this home to myself. I am one of Christ's Family, one of His Branches, a Stone of His temple. I may sometimes feel very lonely, I may be among people who speak against Holy Things, I may even hear terrible things said against our Holy Religion, I may be very, very much discouraged. Then let me remember what our Lord has said: "He is with us all the days; He will not let even the gates of Hades overcome His Church". What do I mean by this? How can I bring it into my life? I must pray God to make me believe that there will always be a number of faithful Christians in His Church, whom He keeps in His Fear and Faith, that however lonely I feel, however frightened I am when I hear things said against religion, I must remember our Lord's promise, and trust Him, and go on with the work He has given me, and use thankfully the Means of Grace given in and through the Church. And another thing, I shall perhaps hear it said that there never were such bad times as these; that clever men have found out many things which prove the Christian religion to be untrue; or that there is so much wickedness in the Church, that is, among Christians.

Now let me pray God to help me not to lose heart. I probably am not at all learned, but if I could read the history of all that has happened, I should see that ever since the Day of Pentecost, when the Christian Church began to work in the world, there have been great troubles of every sort. Persecutions, mocking by clever people, wickedness in people who were called Christians, lukewarm and cold Christians, quarrels among Christians.

Our Lord told us it would be so. He never told us we

should find it was *easy* to be a Christian. But He did promise, and He does give, His Presence always. Therefore the Church has lasted. Nearly 1900 years she has gone on handing down the Truth; the Faith as we say it in the Apostles' Creed. Some parts of the Church seem to teach less than others; some parts teach more than others, but all alike hold that Creed. God will defend His Church. So let me pray for this defence—that He will save her from all false teaching, from unhappy divisions, from make-believe friends.

And while I pray for the whole Church, I should think of my own branch of the Church to which I belong. When I think of what she has done for me, the grace I have received through her Ministry, shall I not pray that God will cleanse and defend her?

May God defend our dear Mother Church from all enemies inside and outside, but most of all from enemies inside; from make-believe Christians, from worldly Christians, from false teaching, from bitter quarrels and dissensions.

And I can pray for my own little corner of the Church: the particular Church in which I make my Communions or go to any services. (It is a great thing for me if I can get to belong to one special Church.) Let me pray God to defend that particular Church and parish from all harm; from bitter opposition to Church teaching, from anything that would hinder the work of God being carried on. If I heard of any difficulty in the parish, let me pray about it. If in every parish, in every Church, there were a band of Communicants who prayed constantly about the wants of that parish, the whole Church would be made more like what our Lord wants His Church to be—"glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing," as S. Paul says in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. If I know of any enemies to the Church of Christ in my own

parish, let me pray God very, very much for them, that God would turn their hearts, and defend His Church and all His family from evil of any kind.

"Lord of our life, and God of our salvation,
Star of our night, and Hope of every nation,
Hear and receive Thy Church's supplication,
Lord God Almighty.

"See round Thine ark the hungry billows curling;
See how Thy foes their banners are unfurling;
Lord, while their darts envenom'd they are hurling
Thou canst preserve us.

"Lord, Thou canst help when earthly armour faileth,
Lord, Thou canst save when deadly sin assaileth,
Lord, o'er Thy Church nor death nor hell prevaileth;
Grant us Thy peace, Lord.

"Grant us Thy help till foes are backward driven,
Grant them Thy truth, that they may be forgiven,
Grant peace on earth, and after we have striven,
Peace in Thy heaven." Amen. (214.)

THOUGHT III.

"And, because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succour."

Text.—"PUT NOT YOUR TRUST IN PRINCES NOR IN ANY CHILD OF MAN, FOR THERE IS NO HELP IN THEM" (Ps. cxlv. 2).

God's Succour, that is, His help, is needed by His Church at every moment.

There are very real dangers for the Church as a whole, and I know of course what very real dangers there are for each single Christian. Can I get any lesson out of this for myself? This I think—I must never, never allow myself

to feel that there is any safety in any plan, or any help to be got out of anything apart from Jesus Christ. I must never let myself lean on any teacher or clergyman or friends in such a way that I can't be good without them. I must never think or act as if I thought that any good can be done for people except through Jesus Christ. Behind every good thing, in every Sacrament, in every help that God gives us, is our Lord Jesus Christ, and the moment any Christian, any Church, any part of a Church begins to think Christ can be put out of sight, and that we need not talk so much about Jesus, or about His Precious Blood, or about our own sins, then we are in danger. I must pray that because there are dangers all round us God would make us really feel we need Him, His help.

And again, in my little corner of the Church. Do I belong to any Guild, or Class, or Club? Do I want to put religion rather at the back than in the front? Not to talk much about going to Church or Prayers, to let people join, without caring whether they mean to try to belong to God's family? Well, I shall find that my little corner, my little part of the big Church, will not be safe without God.

It is not that many other things may not enter into our lives besides religious things. No, we may learn many things not directly religious, play many games, act plays, and so on. But running through all this life of this bit of the Church, this Club, or G.F.S. Branch, or Guild, should be the thought of God, of our Lord's Service, of ourselves as His members, of our need of His succour. Then, if we pray, God will take care of us, He will keep us from running into any ways that might hurt the life of our souls. He will give us a right judgment about our enjoyments. He will keep us from quarrelling, from envy, spite and many other dangers. And if this is true of our little bit of the Church, so it is of the whole Church. Sometimes the

whole Church, or a part of the Church, has fallen into great mistakes through forgetting God, through allowing the world to take possession of her. And it is against such dangers we must pray. People who read history can tell us of such mistakes. And the Church might make a dreadful mistake by allowing persons to think lightly of Holy Marriage. To allow persons who have dishonoured marriage to come to the Holy Communion, to allow persons who have been divorced to marry again in Church. That is the sort of terrible mistake we must pray God to keep His Church from making.

This and questions like this are constantly starting up. I may not yet be old enough to give my opinion on them, but I shall be probably by-and-bye obliged to do so, and it is my duty to be ready to speak out. God will succour His Church if her members pray to Him one and all for His succour.

Our part must be to ask Him for that help, and to trust to that help, and to nothing else.

"Thy mercy will not fail us,
Nor leave Thy Work undone,
With Thy right Hand to help us,
The victory shall be won.
And then by men and angels
Thy Name shall be adored,
And this shall be the anthem—
One Church, one Faith, one Lord." (604.)

Thought IV.

"Preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness."

Text.—"Who are kept by the power of God" (1 Peter i. 5).

I must try never to feel discouraged about the Church as a whole or about myself as a member. We, who make up

the whole family of God, are quite weak and very sinful, but it is God Who is in us, with us, around us. His Help, I suppose, means His Grace. All the store of Grace He gives through Prayer and in the Sacraments. And His Goodness: perhaps that means our Lord Jesus Christ's Holiness which He imparts to us. For God is by His Holy Spirit making, building up very slowly but very surely, the Church of the Redeemed, which is to be entirely holy. In each man or woman who has given himself or herself up to Christ is being formed a character like Christ's. Jesus gives us Himself, takes our sinful nature, and bit by bit changes it into His. That is what S. Paul tells us in the wonderful Epistle to the Ephesians, from which this week's epistle is taken. He says very, very wonderful things to us about the Love of Christ and of the dwelling of Christ in us. I must try sometime to read that Epistle through. Perhaps I could get a few minutes' extra time on Sundays, and on my knees read two or three verses of this Epistle very slowly two or three times over until I have gone through it, and then I could begin another book. I shall find Bishop Gore's *Comment on the Epistle to the Ephesians* very helpful, and very probably some friend would lend it to me.

All this Love of Christ goes out to us. Surely that is what we mean by Goodness. God's Help and Goodness *guard* us as our verse says.

But we pray God will preserve His Church. Keep it safe, keep it from "going," as it were, "bad".

For how often do I myself not feel I can't keep on trying any longer? And then I have to begin again. So it is with the Church. Sometimes a part of the Church seems dead; it was so with our own Church of England. But God's goodness is *in* her, going out to her, and there come Times of Revival. Well, we pray that our Church may be *kept* by His Help and His Goodness from deadness and

coldness. So again I may pray very much for my own little part of the Church. I should pray that many, many souls may be led to Jesus, that He will, as this week's Epistle says, "dwell" in the hearts of all who come to Holy Communion, who *seem* to be His outwardly.

And all who belong to Him should be as the "salt of the earth". Salt, we know, keeps things from turning bad. So the Christian Church is to be in the midst of the world and keep it from turning bad. How? By the lives of its members. Oh, let me pray to-day that God will keep the Church in this place in which I dwell fresh and pure and holy; that He will give *me* a sense of His Goodness, His Help, which shall make me strong—more than that, that He to-day will dwell in my heart and make me know the "Love of Christ which passeth knowledge".

"Thine for ever! Saviour, keep
Us Thy frail and trembling sheep;
Safe alone beneath Thy care,
Let us all Thy Goodness Share." (280.)

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Lord, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Lord, we pray Thee that Thy Grace may always prevent and follow us."

Text.—"By grace ye have been saved through Faith" (Ephes. ii. 8).

It is a very important thing that I should really take home to myself the great need I have of God's Grace. I have been led to think a great deal about the Church as a whole. Now let me think of the Gift of Grace God gives to His Church, to each member of that Church.

I thought of Grace, and how God gives it, in the third thought for the first of these Sundays after Trinity. It would be well to turn back and read it over again before next Sunday. But also let me take home to myself the truth that God's grace is His *Free* Gift. I am weak, sinful, helpless. God chooses, not because there is any good in me, to give His Grace. Why?

Because I am one of His Family, *in* our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let me try to think what Grace *is*.

It is the Gift of God working in us, in *me*, by the Holy Ghost and making *me* His. It is the Life of Jesus in our souls. That is why S. Paul says we have been saved by

Grace. Because God in His mercy looks on each Christian who is trying to serve Him, and sees in that Christian the Life of Jesus. Is that true of me? I must not be afraid to claim His Promises. Sometimes people are asked, "Are you saved?" Well, S. Paul says in the text I read just now, "Ye have been saved". And to whom does he say this? To people whom he felt obliged to warn against sins and temptations which were much the same as mine. I *am* in a state of salvation through God's Grace if I am using the means He has set apart to give me more Grace, and if I am daily using His Grace. I may fail very often, but unless I cut myself off by wilful sin for which I do not repent, or deprive my soul of Grace by *not* using God's means of Grace, I can answer, "Yes, I am saved through and by God's Grace". It is He Who plants in me the seed of Life Eternal in my Baptism, it is He Who keeps that life alive in me now. If I have any wish to be better than I am, it is from God. God will give me Grace in abundance. But will His Grace alone be enough with nothing done by me? Ah, no. I must stir up my will. God has given every one a wonderful power of choice of good and evil. I may choose *not* to use the Grace given to me. It is said by a wise teacher that in order to write there must be a pen full of ink and paper to receive it. And he goes on to say that all will go well unless there is something wrong with the paper. If oil has been rubbed on it the hand cannot make the pen write on the paper. And he says the means of Grace are like the pen full of ink, and the hand who guides the pen is the person who brings us the means of Grace, and our souls are the paper itself.[1] Sometimes our souls are incapable of receiving means of Grace.

How can I get myself into such a state that God's Grace would be no use? By sin. Above all, sins of the flesh,

[1] Staley's *Practical Religion*, p. 120.

that is, by sins of impurity and sins of pride, which harden the heart.

Then, again, I must believe the more I use God's Grace the more He will give me.

The oftener I come to Holy Communion the more shall I receive His Grace, and if I do not forget what He has given me when I leave the Church the more shall I find the Grace I get there very helpful to me. The more I fight against sin, against my temper, or wrong wishes, or whatever it is, praying God to help me, the more shall I find how near He is, how true it is that His strength is made perfect in weakness.

To-day before I go out let me fling myself on Jesus. "Lord Jesus, be with me, be in me to-day, give me Thy Grace to begin again to fight."

Or if I know of some temptation which is sure to meet me, let me pray for Grace to resist. Or is there something I *ought* to do? or is there someone whose forgiveness I ought to ask? or someone with whom I should make up a quarrel? or some duty I have left undone? His Grace will be enough if only I ask Him. Prayer will always bring me some Grace. Prayer and Holy Communion will give me all the Grace I need. "He giveth more Grace."

"He, Ransomer from death, and Light from shade,
Now gives His Holy Grace His Saints to aid." (313.)

Thought II.

"Lord, we pray Thee that Thy Grace may always prevent and follow us."

Text.—"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the Throne of Grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. iv. 16).

I ought to learn from this what God teaches us about

His Grace, that He by His Grace will make me strong, and also that He gives His Grace in many ways, but chiefly, and quite certainly, in the Church and through the Sacraments.

Now, I must never think that because I have been baptised, perhaps have been confirmed, perhaps have knelt at God's Altar, that any one of these will make me good *just because* I have received them. For, if I think so, I make these Holy Things into something like the magic spells one reads about in Fairy Tales. In a Fairy Tale a person very often has somebody else's ring given him, which brings him happiness or good fortune without effort on his part. Now it seems shocking to say I thought of any of God's Gifts as if they were spells, but if I simply receive, say, the Holy Communion, and make *no* effort to live as Christ's disciple, the Blessed Sacrament, and indeed any other means of Grace, will do me no good.

Perhaps I can understand this if I think of the poor woman in the Gospel, who had been ill for twelve years, and at last came and touched the Lord and was healed. Why? Because of all the crowd around our Lord she alone had Faith. And so it is now, many are baptised, many come to Holy Communion, and people say, "Look at so-and-so, he's not a bit better because he has been baptised, or confirmed, or has made his Communion". Ah, yes, many come, *some* only have Faith, and take the Holy Sacrament to their *comfort*. That is, as I saw some time ago, they are made strong by the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, or by any other means of Grace.

So to-day let me ask myself, Do I ask God for His Grace? Do I use Holy Communion? Do I read His Word? Do I go about my work trying to please Him?

The two sides of my "Life in Christ" cannot be divided. If I want to be a Christian I must have God's Grace. And

He says I can get that Grace by Prayer, by the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and in other ways. But He also says I must have Faith, that Faith about which I thought a week or two ago. That is, I must wish to have these Holy Things, I must believe God will help me.

I may know people who say that only *Faith* is needed, that it is not needful to come to Holy Communion, for instance. But Jesus Christ says it *is* needful. Do they know better than our Lord?

No. Let me do as the verse at the beginning says: come boldly to the Throne of Grace.

He will always give when I ask Him.

"Fountain of Goodness, Jesu, Lord and God,
Cleanse us, unclean, with Thy most precious Blood;
Increase our faith and love, that we may know
The hope and peace which from Thy Presence flow."
(312.)

THOUGHT III.

"Lord, we pray Thee that Thy Grace may always prevent and follow us."

Text.—"IT IS GOD WHICH WORKETH IN YOU BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK HIS GOOD PLEASURE" (Phil. ii. 13).

I must to-day try to understand the meaning of this Prayer about Grace.

Prevent means "To go before". We have another Prayer something like this which begins, "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings". That is "go before". Now, this is what our Father in Heaven does for us. It is from Him that the very first beginnings of our Christian life come. Perhaps some one is far away from God, doing wrong things, never thinking of God. Well, that person is brought to think of God, perhaps by hearing some sermon, or

reading something, or by trouble, or by sickness. The Holy Spirit stirs in that person's heart, and *if* he will listen gives him Grace to go further—to pray, then to pray more, to go to Church, to speak to a Clergyman, to seek for Baptism if he has not been baptised, or for Absolution, or Holy Communion. Step by step God gives him Grace to go further. He or she begins by leaving off some bad thing, something which is holding him back; more Grace comes little by little. God's Grace goes before, stirs up the person's will to *go on*.

And so it is with the happy Christians who have never gone willingly away from God. From their Baptism onwards God sends His Grace—He goes before them. As I have read in the Old Testament that the children of Israel were guided in the wilderness by a Pillar of Cloud *going before* them, so is it with me in the wilderness of this world.

And, again, if I am really beginning to try to be Jesus Christ's Disciple, God will give me Grace to go before me in new beginnings. Do I feel I ought to pray more, to come to Holy Communion more often, to begin any new practice? God will give me Grace to set about it. Supposing I feel I ought to go to Holy Communion every Sunday, God will make me able. Suppose I feel I have never confessed my sins properly to God, never laid them at the Feet of Jesus, God will give me Grace, He will go *before me*. Once any one has made up his or her mind to come to Jesus, God's Grace seems to draw them in every sort of way. But I must use my will. I must *want* to go on. Yet if to-day I feel I don't really want to go far, that I don't want to go to Holy Communion; I don't want to be a real Christian, and yet I *know* I *ought* to want. God's Grace *is* preventing me, going before me. *If* I pray to Him to make me *want* to be converted, and if I *am* converted (to show what that means let me look back to the Third

Sunday after Trinity, the second Thought), let me pray to Him that His "Preventing Grace will make me *want* to go on to whatever He calls me". I may see some hard duty lying straight in front of me, I may see I ought to beg someone's pardon, or confess some bit of deceit, or give up something I *like* but which is sinful, or do some kind thing. God is sending His Grace to me to make me see this duty; let me kneel and pray He will send me Grace to go on. And if I don't see any special thing to-day, let me pray that His Grace may work in me and go before me to keep me in His ways for this day.

The truth is, if our Lord will by His Grace teach me to give myself up to Him body, soul and spirit, His Grace will lead me on and on to the Life everlasting. He will draw me by His Great Love. Have I given myself to Him?

"Give us Holy Freedom,
Fill our hearts with love;
Draw us, Holy Jesus,
To the realms above." (194.)

THOUGHT IV.

"Lord, we pray Thee that Thy Grace may always prevent and follow us."

Text.—"IT IS GOD WHICH WORKETH IN YOU BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE (Phil. ii. 13).

God's Grace is to go *before* us and to follow us. I pray that God will be all round me. His Help, His Love, His Care. And, indeed, if Jesus is in me, if I am living His Life, how can it be otherwise? If His Grace, as it were, prepares the way, stirs me up, and helps me to go on from step to step, so His Grace follows me and helps me not to fall away from Grace.

Life in Christ, Christian Life is this. Each one for

himself or herself realises Jesus for his own Saviour. Realises "*my* sins". Even for those who have always kept in their Father's House after their Baptism there comes a time when they too realise, take home to themselves, "Jesus Christ died for me". That is coming to Christ.

Have I come to Jesus? Do I know I am a sinner? But Jesus has died for me. I can never, never think of this too often, and if I have come I must thank Him, that most dear Saviour Who *prevented* me by His Grace. And the next part of Christian Life is abiding in Christ. That is, living the Life of Jesus. Jesus Christ will form His Own Character *in us* if we will let Him. I, if I want to be His, must use the means by which Jesus gives me His Own Life.

And I suppose when the Church teaches us to pray that God's Grace may follow us, I mean that I may not only be led on to good things, but *may persevere*, that is, not fall away.

S. Paul speaks of "falling from grace". Holy Fear should work in me, as I saw in the second Thought for the second Sunday after Trinity, a real watchfulness lest I begin to fall from Grace.

Any little bit of self-indulgence, any wish to be less strict, should make me stop and pray God that His Grace may *follow* me.

And if I come in God's Mercy to being allowed to do any bit of work for Him, to help in a G.F.S. Branch, a Club, or Class, or whatever it is, especially any work for children, my own or other people's, let me pray Him that His Grace may be all round me, that He will make me learn beforehand by His Preventing Grace to go on to any new duty, that He will keep me from getting tired.

"While I am a pilgrim here,
Let Thy Love my spirit cheer,
Be my Guide, my Guard, my Friend,
Lead me to my journey's end." (527.)

Thought V.

"And make us continually to be given to all good works."

Text.—"Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit" (S. John xv. 8).

All through the Bible we are taught that God asks for Holiness.

In the New Testament we are taught how this Holiness can be got, even by sinners as bad as I.

First, we are taught of our Lord's Work *for* us in His Blessed Life, in His Death on the Cross, in His Resurrection, then we are taught of His work *in* us. How He comes to each Christian who will accept Him, and forms in that man or woman Himself. So that each Christian is to *reflect* Jesus.

Now this character is to show itself. How? By good works. *I* am to be good, or, rather, to grow good. Now think what God requires. Not perfect Christians, but Christians who are growing good, and who show it in the only way they can. By their works, their lives. If a person is merciful, pitiful, he will do good things, he can't help it.

Now, at first I must not be too cast down if I find my life is made up of trying *not* to do wrong things rather than of doing right ones. That is, if I am just converted. It may be I have a bad temper against which I have to fight, or bad wishes to resist. But I shall find very, very soon that our dear Lord does not say Don't do this, don't do that, but *Do* so and so, *be* so and so, and then you won't want to do the wrong things.

Good Works. Can I bring forth any? Yes, I may, whatever my life is, bear much fruit. For there is no one who can't be *kind*. I may have a chance of helping someone with their work, or their children, on this very day. Is

there anyone I could help to come to Holy Communion by calling them in time or by doing their work for them while they are out? Is there any child to whom I could teach its prayers or its Bible stories and Catechism? My own child, anyone else's? Is there any duty I am apt to shirk such as rules about cleanliness? Is there anyone I could go and see who is ill? Is there anything more I could do about my daily work? Do I do it as well as I can? Could I give up any ways which are not perfectly honest? Is there anyone younger than myself, anyone under me, to whom I could be kinder? Is there anyone older—my parents, teachers, employers, friends—to whom I could be more considerate, more unselfish?

Above all, if I am married, is there any duty in which I fail, and could I do anything more to help on Purity, Self-control? It is such a great work to set an example of Modesty, to check myself in talking of wickedness, or reading about wicked things.

All these things, or most of them, are what I can do. And perhaps God will give me other work. If ever He lays me upon a sick bed I must not think He has no work for me. There is the work, the hard work of bearing His Will. There is the work of Prayer. Perhaps He may call me to work for Him by helping others. A parent, a nurse, a teacher has such work to do for God. I may be one of these. Whatever it is to which He calls me, let me pray Him for Grace to bear much fruit. And I may truly feel this is a Prayer prayed as Christ would have me pray, that is, in His Name.

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee,
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise."

—FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Lord, we beseech Thee grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Lord, we beseech Thee grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world."

Text.—"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye can bear" (1 Cor. x. 13).

I have thought a great deal lately about Grace. I know it is the gift of God. The Life of Christ given me by the Holy Ghost. And now to-day I have to think why God gives it me.

To withstand, that is, *use* it, stand up against Temptation.

To train our souls, to make us *strong*.

The reason we are put into this world at all is to train us, or rather to make in us a new character, a new nature, which is Christ's. I learned not long ago that God means His children to be "Comforted," that is, made strong. Now (as I saw before), a man who runs or walks much must by the act of running or walking make his limbs strong; a blacksmith grows stronger and stronger because he is always lifting heavy weights. So it will be

with me if I use God's Grace and *resist* temptation. Let me think to-day of temptation in a general sort of way.

1. I must get by God's Grace into a *habit* of not giving way to what seem small temptations.

If I yield day by day to what seem small sins I shall get weaker and weaker, and then a great temptation will come on me, and I shall give way at once, because I have no *habit* of resistance.

For instance, I lie in bed a little later every day, and never say my prayers perfectly. That is, I get into a habit of *not* taking trouble about my Prayers. By and by a temptation comes to give them up altogether for one day. Shall I find it easy to resist? Or I get into a habit of wasting pennies on trifles, and so I shall not find it easy to get into a habit of saving money, when it is needful to save for, say, my children's sake.

Or I get into a habit of careless, bad talk. I lounge about with people who will do me no good, and little by little I find it harder to withstand evil; and perhaps I find myself falling into a great sin, which I seem to have no power to resist.

Again, if I give way to my temper every time it is tried, if I use angry words, if I yield to the desire to give a blow to, say, a child who vexes me, little by little I shall find I am worse and worse tempted. But let me think of the bright side. I struggle against little sins, or what seem little sins, I pray God to help me, I get up in time to pray, I keep back cross words, I pull myself back from listening to wicked talk, I turn away from some brightly-lit place of amusement where I know I shall hear wrong things, and by degrees God makes me stronger and stronger. Each time I by His Grace conquer a temptation to sin I am stronger than I was. And I must not be frightened. God will always make the way for me to escape. Let me pray

Him to make me believe that *nothing* matters really except sin, and that nothing is worth while possessing if it means possessing it by a sin.

"When temptation sorely presses,
In the day of Satan's power,
In our times of deep distresses,
In each dark and trying hour,
By Thy mercy,
O deliver us, Good Lord." (287.)

THOUGHT II.

"Lord, we beseech Thee grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world."

Text.—"LOVE NOT THE WORLD, NEITHER THE THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD" (1 S. John iii. 15).

I have been taught that there are three great enemies of the Soul—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Let me try to think what is meant by the *world*. It does not mean this earth on which I live, with all the beauty of mountains, and sea, and flowers, and trees, and lovely skies.

No. But it does mean all the people in the world who set themselves against God.

The temptations of the world are the temptations that come to me from other people.

Now, it is not quite easy now-a-days to settle what is the world.

Once, in the early days, it was. There was the Church, the Family of God, there was the world outside.

Yet very soon sin spoilt the Family of God, the world crept in, as I read in the Acts in the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

But though it is not easy to say where the world is and

where it is not, it is easy to see that every Christian has to fight against the world. What is my world? My world is simply the people among whom I live and work. Some may be real Christians, but in so far as I am tempted by any person to do wrong, that person is part of my *world*.

I may be tempted in many ways.

1. By the customs of the people among whom I live.

It may be the fashion to spend a good deal on outside clothes, feathers, smart-looking frocks. If I spend money on that sort of thing, and have no money to pay my debts, or buy myself strong boots or warm clothing, I am led away by the world. Again, it may be a custom among my world to spend a great deal on mourning and on funerals. Now, if I am silly enough to spend money on such folly as crape, or horrible mourning coaches, I am simply yielding to the pomps of this world. Sometimes it is hard to resist silly customs. I can very often get help from my Clergyman.

Or it may be a custom to spend the Holy Season of Christmas in one long bout of feasting and drinking. If I give in to this because "other people do," again it is my world which is leading me astray. Again, it may not be the custom of my friends and acquaintances to go to Church on Sundays or Week days, or to get up early for the Blessed Sacrament. If I neglect any of these because I fear what my next-door neighbours will say, I am yielding to the world. Again, it may be a fashion among my friends to bet, to gamble, or to have funeral feasts in public houses, or to go long excursions on Sundays, with no care to put in some Church-going; these and many other customs *are* wrong. Now, if I give in to a wrong thing because "other people do," I am led away by the world. Or if I fear to *do* a right thing because of what people will say, I am frightened by the world.

Or if I do wrong things that I may get on in the world, if I am so set upon making more money that I have no time for Prayer and Holy Communion, or for kind acts, I suppose it is the world which has got a grip of me. Or if I get a little higher in the world than I was when I began my grown-up life, and get ashamed of *old* friends, not acquaintances or people who did me harm, but perhaps my own relations, my father or mother, brothers and sisters, or some friend with whom I played.

I may only be a servant in a big house or a worker in a shop or a factory, or I may be a master or mistress of a house, or have people under me, as upper servants, matrons, teachers have. Wherever I am, and whatever I am, I shall find temptations of the world. But God will send me all the Grace I need.

To get to care for Him, for His Service, is the best way to get *not* to care much for this world.

I must notice that although I have to give up many things of this world, I may *rightly* enjoy what helps me to be good. Good books, lovely pictures, music, flowers, are all God's Gifts.

"O let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent,
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent;
Thou gav'st Thyself for me,
I give myself to Thee." Amen. (259.)

THOUGHT III.

"Lord, we beseech Thee grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the flesh."

Text.—"NOW THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE MANIFEST, WHICH ARE THESE: ADULTERY, FORNICATION, UNCLEANNESS,

LASCIVIOUSNESS, IDOLATRY, WITCHCRAFT, HATRED, VARIANCE, EMULATIONS, WRATH, STRIFE, SEDITIONS, HERESIES, ENVYINGS, MURDERS, DRUNKENNESS, REVELLINGS, AND SUCH LIKE" (Gal. v. 19-21).

The flesh. That means my own sinful nature which I am to overcome by the Life of Jesus Christ which is begun in my Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, and which is to be fed in Holy Communion.

Now, the sins which my body leads me to commit are counted over by S. Paul in very plain words. And he goes on to say that whoever does such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, if I, in such sins, give way to them, I shall get myself into such a state that I shall shut myself *out from God*. Now, I think when I read over S. Paul's list I pretty well understand what the sins are.

But let me notice two or three things.

1. There is not one rule for men and another for women. A Christian boy or man *must* keep himself pure as much as a Christian girl or woman.

2. Marriage does not atone for sin. I must remember and help others to remember that for unmarried men and women to live as if they were married people is deadly sin.

3. S. Paul puts jealousies and envyings and many other things as being just as bad as these sins against the seventh Commandment.

Do I take this home to myself? Do I allow myself in jealousy to say unkind, untrue things of my neighbour, and think it's all right? "*I* don't get drunk, and I've always been respectable." S. Paul says jealousy, envy, and wrath are as bad as the others. Sins against purity are *very* awful sins, but so are sins against Love. Yet how little do many Communicants think of such sins. I suppose

witchcraft means anything like trying to pry into the future, to tell fortunes, to pry into things which God has not told us about.

Drunkenness, Revellings? I suppose those sort of parties which go on for hours and hours, and in which people see how much they can drink, are what is meant by revellings. And drunkenness? Oh, I can see for myself the misery it brings. Strifes? Sometimes there are awful quarrels in a family about money, or two neighbours have a hot dispute, and end by refusing to speak to each other.

No Christian can do this without great sin.

Idolatry means setting one's heart on anything more than on God. If I love any one so much that I let him or her persuade me to give up, say, my Church, my Communions, that is idolatry. Variance? I suppose that is stirring up parties and party spirit.

Sometimes a family or a Club is made utterly miserable by there being two parties, and every one being on one side or another.

Now, all these are terrible sins for any one to commit. But suppose I, myself, or some one I know is stricken with the sense of having lived in such sin. Suppose a poor girl who has been all wrong and lost her character, and then by God's mercy is converted, or perhaps some one repents of a bad, jealous temper. Then such a one must believe that however bad his or her life has been God will freely forgive; that the sins may be blotted out, that a new life may be begun. But S. Paul is speaking to those who have been baptised into Christ and profess to know Him, and he warns them of the awful danger of such sin. And for any one who knows that such things *are* sins and still to go on sinning *is* dangerous. From falling back into deadly sin, Good Lord deliver us.

"Jesus, Lord of Life and Glory,
Bend from heaven Thy gracious ear;
While our waiting souls adore Thee,
Friend of helpless sinners, hear;
By Thy mercy,
O deliver us, Good Lord.

"From the depths of nature's blindness,
From the hardening power of sin,
From all malice and unkindness,
From the pride that lurks within,
By Thy mercy,
O deliver us, Good Lord. (287.)

Thought IV.

"Lord, we beseech Thee grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the flesh."

Text.—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24).

I am told we must crucify our sinful nature.

Now, in thinking of the world and the temptations that came from other people, I saw many things I have to give up. Not the things which God gave us to do us good, that is true; but it may be that through my own sin I may be *obliged* to give up things that are not wrong in themselves, but are wrong for me.

For instance, if I find that I, or any one I can help, is tempted to take too much strong drink, it must be given up at once and entirely. By God's mercy I may be quite free from that temptation and yet have to do with some one who is a slave to drink.

If I can, let me try and persuade such a person, if possible, to go to a home where he or she can be cured. Or

at anyrate to *take* the *pledge*. I, too, may give up strong drink for the sake of helping others.

And so it is with many other things. Some people find dancing is bad for them, excites them. I might find that to dance on Saturday night made me unfit for my early Communion. There is the plain duty. Dancing *that night* is bad for me. I must not judge other people.

Reading story books sometimes has to be given up by people who find such reading is bad for them. And so I shall find that if I am trying to lead a Christian life I *must* deny myself many things. Some people get far too fond of their food, talk about it, and eat more than is good for them. If I check myself in greediness, if I try not to waste money on stupid things like sweets, I shall find it helps me to be good. Greediness hurts as many souls as drunkenness. And I must guard myself carefully, oh, so carefully, with regard to the dreadful sins of which S. Paul says in another place, "They shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 10).

I must watch against anything immodest, any bad talk, any bad books. I must try and guard any one younger than I am. If ever I have to do with children, do let me pray to God to help me to teach them, especially boys, to be modest and pure.

(If I who read these words am a woman, let me resolve, if ever I have the care of children, to join the Mothers' Union. It will help me in the battle against such sins.)

And I can see what is meant by *crucify*. There must be no *trifling* with such sins. Impurity, drunkenness, wicked temper must be done to death if I do not want to lose Eternal Life. Let me remember also that people who begin by one kind of sin in youth as they grow older leave off that sin, or it leaves them off, and they take to another. The person, man or woman, who has led a life of impurity

often takes perhaps to drinking, perhaps to hoarding money, either of which will kill Eternal Life.

And so that shows me how needful it is to check myself by God's Grace in the very beginnings, and to cut myself off from anything that may seem to tempt me. Our Lord says in His Sermon on the Mount that if we find one eye or one hand causes us to stumble we must cut them off, that it is better to be safe than to be conquered. He means if something very precious to us is leading us wrong we must give it up. There is another kind of giving up. Some people give up home, the hope of marriage, money, everything in the world, and devote themselves to working for God. I must have seen and heard of such.

Our Lord distinctly says some *are* called to this, not all.

But every Christian is called to give up all that hurts his or her soul. Let me ask myself, Am I yielding to any of these sins? Have I a quarrel against any one? Am I quite pure in thought and word and deed? Is there any bad thing I ought to give up? Is there anything, not wrong in itself, but which hurts me, from which I should part?

And one more thought. I must pray God to take away all these bad things S. Paul mentions in the text I read yesterday, but instead of them I must show forth "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance" (which means self-control).

Ah, that is the true life of a Christian—to be known by what he is and what he does—not by what he does *not* do. That is, one should feel that he or she is so kind, so pure, so joyful, rather than "he or she does *not* live in sin, or does *not* give way to temper, or does *not* grumble".

God will help me, Jesus will give me Himself, His Own Life. The Holy Spirit will dwell in me more and more if only I try to resist the very least beginning of sin, and if,

alas! I have yielded, I will turn to God and pray that I may be converted to Him.

"Ah, give me, Lord, the tender heart
That trembles at the approach of sin,
A godly fear of sin impart;
Implant and root it deep within,
That I may dread Thy gracious power,
And never dare offend Thee more." (635.)

THOUGHT V.

"Lord, we beseech Thee grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil."

Text.—"YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL, AS A ROARING LION, WALKETH ABOUT" (1 S. Peter v. 8).

The last class of temptations of which I must think are those which come to me from outside. From the Enemy of souls. Our Lord has told us quite plainly that there is such a being as the devil, and that he is the enemy of all goodness.

Now, sometimes it may be a real comfort to me, or to some one whom I ought to try and help, to remember that certain temptations come from *outside*. Bad thoughts flash into one's mind, wicked suggestions. What sort of temptations come specially from the devil? As I saw before—temptations to despair, to leave off trying. Or temptations to think God is hard on one; or to be proud.

Sometimes people are tried by doubts about our Holy Religion. Instead of praying about these, and trying to get help from others who have faced and conquered these doubts, they get rather proud of themselves, and are rather pleased to frighten simple, unlearned people. This is a temptation of the devil. To be *proud*. Sometimes after a long course of yielding to sin people are glad to *hate*

goodness, to hate good people. Is not this a state of being possessed by the devil?

And sometimes people are deceived by the devil. He makes good appear evil—evil good. He stirs up people to believe that *persecuting* others with whom they do not agree is doing God service. He makes people believe that it is pleasing to God to disturb and mock Christians who are engaged in Holy Worship. And also he deceives foolish, weak souls. Somebody preaches a new religion, tells people that the Gospel story is old fashioned, that the whole truth has been told, say, to some woman in America, and that disease and death are to cease. If we believe her or some other equally silly teachers, souls are led astray and deceived by what Holy Scripture calls "a working of error or a strong delusion" (2 Thess. ii. 11).

Is this frightening? Ah, it need not be, if I will only stay *in* Christ. He says "no one is able to snatch them (His Sheep) out of His Father's Hand". I know how to abide in the Lord Jesus. Prayer, the Holy Communion, the constant coming back to Him for forgiveness.

If I am puzzled I have His Word, His Church, to guide me. If I am frightened or tempted to despair, I have His Own Promise.

"Long as our fiery trials last,
Long as the Cross we bear,
O let our souls on Thee be cast
In never-ceasing Prayer." (248.)

Thought VI.

"And with pure hearts and minds follow Thee, the only God."

Text.—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (S. Matt. v. 8).

Pure in heart. I *must* be pure in heart if I want really to conquer these temptations.

That is, I must have been washed in Christ's Precious Blood and have my will set straight towards God.

There is an old saying, "Unless the vessel is clean, whatever you put into it turns sour". One knows perfectly that if one puts milk into a dirty saucepan it will soon turn sour.

And so unless my heart, my will, is bound to God, my life will not go right. To be pure is to have a single aim, that is, to serve God. I may fail often, but if that is my wish, my purpose, to serve God, to please Him, I shall find by degrees that He gives me Grace to follow where Jesus has led.

The blessing Jesus Christ promises the "pure in heart" is—they shall see God. And this blessing comes, like so many others of God's blessings, by degrees. For one gets to *see*, with the eyes of one's soul, God. God in His Goodness, His Holiness. Perhaps it happens that one has been among Christians and has been taught a great deal, and one has tried to do one's duty in Church and out of Church. And then perhaps at some change in one's life, some sorrow, or some joy, or in the joy of a First Communion, or under the influence of a stirring sermon, one *sees* for one's self what it is to know God. So it is with those who are brought to Jesus out of darkness, "they see Him," as Job in the forty-second chapter of his book says, "and abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes". And I must pray to God to give me more and more the blessings of the "pure in heart". For the more I see Him with the eye of my soul, the more shall I abhor my sins. And this *seeing* God is the blessing of Heaven.

"We shall see Him as He is," says S. John in the third chapter of his lovely Epistle (which I ought to read through as I thought I would read the Epistle to the Ephesians).

Now, purity of heart of course means that one is free from all sorts of terrible sins of the flesh. If I am pure these things should not come into my life, there should be no *thinking* even of sin. But it may happen that I may have to live among or work with people who *do* say bad and wicked things. I may be obliged to know of terrible sins.

But if it is my duty to be among evil things I may still be pure. Our Lord says "These signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them" (S. Mark xvi. 18). Now, our Lord is speaking of things that hurt our bodies: we may be sure He will let us include things that hurt the soul. If I believe—ah, yes, if I am in Christ—then He will not let any wicked thing, any bad talk, any terrible sin that has come into my experience hurt my soul. *If* He in His Goodness keeps me pure, innocent of evil, I shall be able to help others in time. Now, if God in His mercy has kept me from falling into deadly sin, let me pray Him to give me grace to keep pure. I need not for pleasure read wicked stories, go to bad plays, listen to bad talk. I must try and use the ways God gives us over and above the Means of Grace to help us. For a girl there are the Girls' Friendly Society, or the Women's Help Society, or a Guild, or Clubs. For women the Mothers' Union, and for a boy or man there are the Boys' Brigade, Clubs, the White Cross Army, and so on. Union is strength. And if I myself have fallen into deadly sin, or if I know some one who has so sinned and whom I can help, let me remember how our Lord welcomes returning sinners. We must come back, we shall have a hard fight against bad, wicked thoughts, longings to sin, evil companions, a fight far, far harder than if we had kept ourselves pure, but Jesus Christ will give Himself, His

Own Life to be our life, and *in time* those who have lost innocence may gain penitence, and have the blessings of the pure in heart.

I may, either as innocent and pure from fleshly sins, or as penitent and forgiven, do so much to help my brothers and sisters to come back, to begin a new life. A young man or a girl who is turning back to God needs help. They must be brought into Christian company. That is why all who are trying to lead Christian lives need such help as a Guild or Club, or something of the sort, whatever their past lives have been. But of course these are only outside aids. What I need is the Life of Jesus given to *me*, to every one who needs it, and who will take our dear Lord at His Word.

"Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their soul is Christ's abode.

"The Lord Who left the heavens
Our life and peace to bring,
To dwell in lowliness with men,
Their Pattern and their King.

"Still to the lowly soul
He doth Himself impart,
And for His dwelling and His Throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

"Lord, we Thy Presence seek,
May ours this blessing be;
Give us a pure and lowly heart,
A temple meet for Thee." Amen. (261.)

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee."

Text.—"We beseech and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (1 Thess. iv. 1).

I have often thought during these last few weeks of Conversion—what it is. Turning the will to God. Wishing to please Him. And the Collect for this week takes it for granted that we who pray this prayer *are* converted, that we do want to please God. But during the last few weeks also I have thought much about Grace. Now, I cannot do anything right or be good without Grace.

Well, this prayer to-day makes me take home again what Grace is. It is the very life of God, of Jesus. And so, indeed, without Jesus we cannot please God. The Life of Jesus turns our hard, sinful natures into His nature, bit by bit—"Not I, but Christ".

Last week I thought much of the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and if I had to fight them

alone I might be frightened. But, if only I will believe it, Jesus Himself will, nay, does, live in me. Do I want Him? If I want Jesus I must pray. I must pray about each trial, each duty.

And then I must think very much about the Holy Communion.

That is the chief way in which Jesus gives Himself to each soul—gives His Life.

Do I come regularly, and do I make use of the Blessed Sacrament? For, as I saw before, the Holy Communion will not make me good against my will. Therefore let me stop and ask myself: Do I pray earnestly before Holy Communion? Do I give thanks after It? Do I often go back in my heart to those blessed moments of Communion and give thanks to Him? Jesus will stay with me if I will let Him. Therefore I must pray for Grace to keep Him. He can only be driven away by sin, by carelessness, unwatchfulness. To please God. That is what a Christian is to try to do. Is it not wonderful that *I*, who am probably only poor, unlearned, with nothing remarkable about me, should be able to please God?

How can I? What can I do to-day? The next duty. Not something different from yesterday's duty. Very likely I shall have to go on doing the same sort of humdrum duties for many and many a day, but—can't I do these things better? Each day before I go to work let me on my knees just look forward—I must grow in the Christian Life, and by degrees I shall see new opportunities to please God. But each day, as I finish my morning prayers, let me look on to what I am going to do, whom I shall meet. My work, let me try to do it for God.

It may be sweeping a room, making a dress, attending to a child, or working at a trade, or a whole number of small, petty duties. They can *every one* be done for God.

Then there will be temptations like those I thought of last week. I must know that very often my temper will be tried, my honesty, or my purity. Then there may be times when I can do something for another. It may be an errand for a neighbour, a sick person visited, a letter written for some one, or to cheer some one, another's work done for him or her. Sometimes a bit of work for God's Church. All these may come in my way. Let me be on the outlook. If Jesus is with me, *in* me, I shall be able so to work and please God.

"Love Divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of Heaven, to earth come down;
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown." (520.)

THOUGHT II.

"O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee."

Text.—"WORK YOUR WORK BETIMES, AND IN HIS TIME HE WILL GIVE YOU YOUR REWARD" (Ecclus. li. 38).

I thought yesterday of the object of my life—what it should be—to please God.

And that if I am converted, if I do want to please God, I must have Christ's Life given to me. I know that the Life of Jesus begins in my Baptism, and is fed by the Holy Communion.

Do I want to please God? Now I must not be frightened if I feel I want a great many other things also. For I *must* remember that God looks on me not as what I am now but on what I am turning to be; and if He sees that I am trying to live Christ's Life, He will be patient.

So if I set out to-day resolving I will try to *do*, and to *be* what pleases God, I shall grow to love, to please Him in time.

But, if I am trying to please God, I must not expect Him to be pleased with my doing things which *seem* done for Him but are really done to get praise. For instance, I may be tempted to seem to be religious because I shall be noticed by some one richer or in some way better off than myself. The temptation may not come in my way, but on the other hand it may. Often people think they are doing something to please God, and it is done to please themselves. Can I not understand this? For instance, a person who sings in a Church Choir may and should sing simply for the glory of God. But if he (or she) is very proud of his voice, jealous of other voices, eager to show off—can it be said that his singing is done for God? But, on the other hand, I must not be frightened by this danger. I must not think that if I do things to please my father or mother I am not pleasing God. As I saw before, the boy or girl who keeps from gambling, or going to public-houses, because such things would "vex mother," or who saves money to keep the home people, will be led on from this love to the Love of God. But it is praise of men, getting noticed by "bigger" people than ourselves, that we must be careful about. And the putting of this aim simply before me will keep me simple. I must not be afraid to *seem* to be religious if I am trying to *be* religious. I must not shrink from beginning a new duty or going on with an old one if I know that duty is pleasing to God. Some people are afraid to go to Holy Communion because the home people, or their companions, or the people among whom they work, will say, "So and so sets up to be religious".

Ah, yes. I must indeed "set up" to be religious. For, as I have learned, religion is that which ties or binds us to God.

Let me just ask myself: Will it please God for me to go

to Holy Communion, or to do this particular bit of kindness? Or in the case of some doubtful pleasure, do I believe it will please God for me to go to this party, to read this book? Sometimes a pleasure, a real, rightful bit of pleasure, comes, and I can joyfully feel my Father is pleased I should have this, whatever it may be.

If only I will pray day by day that His will be done in me and by me, if only I will feed, or, rather, let Him feed, the Life He has given, I shall find that day by day He shows me His will. He gives me new opportunities for pleasing Him as He sees I am able to use them.

"O Christ our God, Who with Thine own hast been,
Our spirits cleave to Thee, the Friend unseen.

Vouchsafe that all who on Thy bounty feed
May heed Thy Love, and prize Thy gifts indeed.

Make every heart that is Thy dwelling-place
A water'd garden fill'd with fruits of grace. (559.)

THOUGHT III.

"Mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.

Text.—"HE WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH" (S. John xvi. 13).

I thought of how Christ is willing to take possession of us, of *me*. It is God the Holy Ghost brings me into oneness with Jesus, and indeed I cannot divide His Work from Christ's. It is He Who makes the Sacraments to be means of Grace, it is He Who gives the Christian light, and I know how S. Paul after describing the works of the flesh goes on to describe the Fruits of the Spirit. Those who live in Jesus and are filled by the Holy Spirit bring forth "Love,

joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance" (self-control) (Gal. v. 22).

Indeed, I may thankfully know that God is my Father, Whom I can trust with all my heart. Jesus is my Saviour, Who joins me to Himself. The Holy Spirit dwells in me to make me one with Jesus.

So the Holy Spirit will tell (direct) me how I should please God.

I thought of my daily life, of all its temptations, and of my duties, and I might very easily feel and say "how can I know" God the Holy Ghost will teach me? Now, a Christian is taught both by the Church and by the Bible. God the Holy Ghost will make both the teaching of the Church and of the Bible good for every Christian's needs. And I saw before how, when I am puzzled, I can find out what the Church of God has taught about religion, or what the Bible has laid down about such things as the love of money, the wish for revenge, and so on. But, besides this, God the Holy Ghost dwells in every Christian to give him light.

If I pray to God the Holy Ghost, when I am puzzled as to whether I ought to do or not to do something, I shall be helped.

The Holy Spirit is to make me strong. That is why He comes in Confirmation.

Now, I ought to have no doubt that the Holy Ghost has come to me; I am a Baptised, Confirmed Christian. But day by day I ought to pray that God will give me the Holy Spirit in greater measure. It would be very nice every Sunday if I could add a prayer to the Holy Ghost as well as that prayer for unity: Hymn 157, "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire".

Again, as I saw before, God the Holy Ghost will help each Christian to see the difference between false teaching and

true teaching. Sometimes what *seems* to be a new Truth comes home to my mind. (It is not really new, only seems to be.) For instance, I might hear for the first time of the great joy and comfort many Christians have in praying for the blessed dead. Now, God the Holy Ghost will help me to find out that that is a true bit of teaching, and a part of our belief in the Communion of Saints. Or I may be taught for the first time how blessed it is to think very deeply—that is, *meditate*—at times on God's Holy Word. "O God, the Holy Ghost, make me feel for myself the truth of what Saints have said of the Joy of Christian life."

Now, I must trust God to be as good as His Word.

He has promised that He will help me Himself to keep me from sin, and He has promised to give me the Holy Spirit, to help me to know His Will.

Therefore I must believe that although kind friends or holy Priests of God may help me, yet that beyond all friends, all bits of advice from friends or clergymen, there is God—the Holy Ghost. It is quite right to ask help or counsel, but it is not right for a Christian to lean entirely on any one but God. In all things I must pray.

"Our Blest Redeemer, ere He breathed
His tender last farewell,
A Guide, a Comforter, bequeathed
With us to dwell.

"He came sweet influence to impart,
A gracious willing guest,
While He can find one willing heart
Wherein to rest.

"And His that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of Heaven.

"And every virtue we possess,
And every triumph won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.

"Spirit of Purity and Grace,
Our weakness, pitying, see;
O make our hearts Thy dwelling-place,
And worthier Thee." Amen. (207.)

THOUGHT IV.

"That Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts."

Text.—"THOU SHALT GUIDE ME WITH THY COUNSEL" (Ps. lxxiii. 24).

I thought yesterday of the Blessed Comforter, Who is to guide me into all truth.

Now, this Holy Spirit is my guide, and therefore I must give myself up to His guidance in all things. First, as to direction, that is, telling me what to do, as a Master directs his servants. Sometimes my way will not seem quite clear. Two duties may seem to clash. Let me remember always to take all my puzzles, all my difficulties to God, and pray Him to guide me with His counsel, that is, advice.

The way will by degrees be made plain. God may indeed give me friends to help me, but I must always pray over the advice given by friends, even by very holy friends.

The Holy Spirit is to cleanse also. He will, by His indwelling, direct even my thoughts. I shall be able to think of good things, not of the evil I have heard. God the Holy Ghost will direct my words. One who is trying to live the life of Jesus, who is joined to Jesus by the Holy Spirit, should only speak gentle, true and pure words.

If He is directing my heart, I shall be led to speak as well as think rightly. Now, sometimes, I may be called on to say whether I think a certain thing is right or wrong, or my advice is asked, or I may, as time goes on, be called upon to reprove some one—a child, for instance. I should get into the habit of sending up short quick prayers for help at other times. This very Collect is very short, if I had it in my heart.

Then God the Holy Spirit is to *rule* my heart. And if my heart is ruled by Him so will my life be ruled. For, if I am joined by Him to Jesus, as I saw before, He will help me to bring forth lovely Fruits of Love, and Joy, and Peace.

Sometimes it is well for me to go over this list of the Fruits of the Spirit, and ask myself if there are any beginnings of them in my life. I who read these words ought to be a Communicant. Am I bringing forth these Fruits?

Am I content because I do not fall into very bad sins, because I say my prayers more or less often, come to Communion sometimes, and, if I am content, can I dare to pray this prayer—that God would in *all* things direct and rule my heart? But if I am not contented, if I feel there are few Fruits in my life, let me begin afresh to-day. Let me, before I go out, kneel down and put myself into God's Hands. Let me say this Prayer: "O God, forasmuch as without Thee *I* am not able to please Thee, make me *want* to please Thee, let Thy Holy Spirit in all things direct me, rule me to-day, for the sake of our Lord". And then, if I have no more time, let me think even on my way to work what lies before me, and send up short prayers to God.

If God the Holy Ghost rules my heart, He will bring back to my mind the laws our Lord has laid down; if I am tempted to evil, to passion, to idleness, to dishonesty, or whatever it is, He will bring back to me the thoughts perhaps which have helped me before, or a verse of Holy

Scripture, a text full of all the thoughts of that Love of Jesus which I must not *hurt*. He will prevent evil things from hurting me, He will suggest ways of pleasing God.

Only let me use this Gift. Don't let me be in any doubt that, unless I am living in some wilful sin, God the Holy Ghost is in me to cleanse, to guide, to *comfort* me.

"Come, gracious Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With light and comfort from above;
Be Thou our Guardian, Thou our Guide,
O'er every thought and step preside." (209.)

Thought V.

"O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts."

Texts.—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1).

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14).

To-day just let me think over what this prayer means. It means exactly what the texts I have read say. That those who are *in* Christ Jesus, joined to Him, led by His Holy Spirit, are forgiven by God and are His children.

This prayer breathes the quiet spirit of trust in our Father that He will give us His Holy Spirit and then—what then? Oh, do I who read these words know at all what the life of a Christian is?

It is one of trust in God entirely. God *has* saved me, therefore He will help me. God will not let anything happen to me which *can* take me out of His Hands.

Then this Christian Life is one of continual prayer—"Give me Thy Holy Spirit".

It is a life which shows itself by those lovely Fruits of Love, Joy, and so on. It is a life of growth. That is, I cannot, if I am Christ's, if I am led by the Spirit of God, stand still. Every year must bring me nearer to God. I must show a little more love, and gentleness, and self-control each year.

And the Christian life is one of leaning entirely on God for help, always living *in* Christ, and when through weakness the Christian falls coming back for fresh cleansing, fresh beginning.

And so a Christian who is led by the Holy Spirit grows to be *free*, free from horrible temptations and lusts. He grows to be happy. He grows to be kind, to be all that those Fruits express.

Do I believe this? Every Saint of God will tell me the same—that the only life for a man or a woman to lead is the life of the child of God, one who is *in* Jesus led by the Spirit.

Have I begun to lead this life? Can I pray this prayer? Do I want God to rule and direct my heart in everything? If not, what holds me back? Is it that I can't believe it's worth while? Then let me pray God to send that Holy Spirit to show me my sins and my Saviour.

But if I *do* think it's worth while, let me again this week pray for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That He will show me the gladness and glory of this life. That in everything He may direct me. That my religion may not be a religion just for Sundays or when I am in trouble, but for week days, for my home, or workshop, or office, or factory. A religion which rules my speech and my doings, because I am joined to Christ, led by His Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit may lead me as He led our dear Lord into the wilderness. There *may* come times, they do to most Christians, when it is *not* a joy to serve God,

when prayers are hard to say, when it seems as if even Holy Communion had done one no good. If God sends me such a time (of course, He may not, but if He does), let me remember how our Lord Jesus was led first into the wilderness and afterwards to Gethsemane and Calvary.

Whatever happens, still let me pray on, pray on until "He maketh the wilderness a standing water; and water springs of a dry ground" (Ps. cvii. 35).

Perhaps I do not understand this yet, but I shall in time, and I shall grow to see all trials are good which God sends to those whom He loves.

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart:

"Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love;
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight:

"Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of Thy grace;
Keep far our foes, give peace at home,
Where Thou art Guide no ill can come.

"Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of Both, to be but One;
That through the ages all along
This may be our endless song,

Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Amen. (157.)

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O Almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready both in body and in soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us."

Text.—"There shall no evil happen unto thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Ps. xci. 10).

I have been thinking much lately of the work of the Holy Spirit and of the Life of Jesus, which is to be my life.

But, after all, "God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost"—all Three Persons—bless, preserve and keep me, and I cannot divide the Blessed Work. And to-day let me think again of how I may claim my Father's care.

I want Him to keep me from all things that hurt. He can because He is Almighty, He will because He is so tender, so full of pity. He is our Father.

I have thought before of the things that may hurt us in the third thought for the Eighth Sunday. Let me try and think if there is anything likely to hurt me or someone I love.

There are many bodily ills against which I may pray. I may live in a very unhealthy house, or work at a very unhealthy trade that is carried on in unhealthy ways. I can certainly pray that God will turn the hearts of those who own the unhealthy houses, or who direct the trades.

Again, I may be called out to face real danger, infection from illness, and so on. I must pray that God will, if He sees it will be right, shield me in danger.

And there are ills of many kinds one can pray against. I may fear some danger to my soul, or to another's soul. The bad example of people with whom one lives. The bad influence a friend brings to bear on myself, or on some one I love. I may some day have to be with one who really does me harm, or, rather, would do me harm unless God protected me. For I think the Collect is praying God to keep us from being harmed by the outside evil of life; not in this prayer do we pray against our sins so much as against things that we may have to meet.

Sometimes it may seem that everything around me is against good and for evil. Or I may know of some one in such a case. Think of a poor young soldier who has been taught to say his prayers and go to Communion. How hard it is for him; perhaps just at first he can find no one who does these things. He may hear all sorts of bad talk at night, he may—especially if he is far away from home, say in India—be surrounded by horrible temptations. Yet, if he is trying, God will help him.

A girl who is servant in a large household where no one thinks of God. There are such households in London. She has plenty to do, and in her spare time she is invited to go on a pleasure party, or do anything rather than go to Church, and if she is brave, and says her prayers, and steals out to Early Communion she is laughed at. Perhaps she is shown how she too might gamble and drink. Perhaps

other, and worse, temptations surround her. Yet here, if she is trying, God will keep her from evil, will keep her unspotted, and help her perhaps to get away from that place; at all events, to hold fast to God in the midst of evil.

Again, I hear of sad and disgraceful things happening to people, children who disgrace their parents, family troubles, a home broken up. If ever I am frightened about these or any such things, I *must* remember to bring my whole trouble to God. He will not always let me off the trouble I fear, but He will make me able to bear it, and sometimes He does see fit to save us from what we feared. He will *not*, if we pray, let the trouble be *hurtful* to our souls.

"Fear Him, ye Saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you His Service your delight;
Your wants shall be His care." (290.)

Thought II.

"That we, being ready both in body and in soul."

Text.—"And the God of Peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 23).

"Ready!" Do I ever think of how I, as a Soldier of Christ, must never be caught as it were asleep, off my guard?

Sometimes it can be seen that a Christian has grown careless, little by little, a little bit of self-indulgence, a little bit of temper, given in to pretty often. A habit of lying in bed too late on Sundays to go to Early Communion, a habit of allowing oneself to read bad, evil books, and so on. Then a really bad temptation comes *suddenly*, and—the Christian is off his guard and falls into some bad sin. People say,

How could he have grown so bad all at once? He didn't. He led up to his bad fall by a continual series of little falls. So he was not *ready* to fight (let me pray God to keep me always on the look out against giving way to what seem little sins). It may seem so small a sin to go to that party which is not a nice one; I go, and I hear nasty jokes, and the next time I hear I'm not so shocked as I was, and the next time I'm not at all shocked.

Or I give in to a tiny bit of dishonesty; I am not found out. The next time it is easier to cheat. I get into the habit and some very, very bad fall follows—perhaps *not* (unfortunately for me) ever found out, and I go on, until to cheat, or be dishonest in my own line of life, no longer bothers me. Oh may God make me "*ready*, aye *ready*," as the sailors say.

But there is another way of being *ready*. It is being ready for His Calls to goodness, to doing something for Him. Every now and then a sudden call comes. A person, a Christian, has been living a quiet, rather humdrum life; all at once a sudden call to some real bit of self-denial comes. If that person has been used to doing God's Will in the little things, if his or her will has been turned to God, then it is all right. He or she will go quite calmly to nurse the dangerous illness, or leave home and go to distant lands to serve as workman, or nurse, or teacher, or Priest in a Mission Station. Ready to give up something very dear to God, perhaps a child who wants to serve God in the way just described.

It is sad to miss the calls, perhaps to danger, perhaps to toil for Him; so glorious to rise to one's opportunities. And one more bit of readiness. It is not needful for me probably to speak much of my religion. But there may be, probably will be, times when I ought to be *ready*. I may suddenly find myself with a dying person. Oh let me be ready to pray; how sad if I could find no words, no courage.

Or some one may ask me to tell them of what religion *is*. I must try to be *ready*. God will help me.

"Watch! 'tis your Lord's command,
And while we speak He's near;
Mark the first signal of His Hand,
And ready all appear." (268).

Thought III.

"That we, being ready both in body and in soul."

Text.—"I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD" (Rom. xii. 1).

Ready in Body. Let me think what this means.

First of all, Why should my body matter?

Because my body belongs to God, and also because it is through my bodily senses, sight, hearing, handling, thinking, and so on, that I get my knowledge of the world outside. And God will at the Last Day give to those who are His new bodies. The life of the blessed dead is not perfect until they obtain their new Bodies. We shall be *ourselves* at that Day.

And if ever I am told by any one that Christ's religion has only to do with the soul, I can always remember this: Our Lord always gets at the soul by the body. Because we, men and women, are made up in this life of body and soul, and if our bodies are *not* ready our souls will not be ready to do Him Service. Now, how can I bring this into daily life?

First, as far as I can, I must keep my body in health. If God sends me sickness, He means it to do me good in many ways, and if my neglect of some law of health has made me ill, He means me to mend my ways in that respect. If, for instance, I have caught a bad cold through wearing too thin boots. Now, the body needs wholesome food. If I can, I must try and find out in sensible books

about food, and if I who read this am a woman I should learn to cook if there is the least probability of my ever becoming a wife, or of having to look after any one else.

I should find out what is the right way of bringing up very young children, what is the proper food to give a young baby.

People who work for their living are sometimes very hard pressed for food, but a woman or girl who has taken the trouble to go to cooking classes, or learn cooking in some way, will certainly be better able to feed herself and her household, and will know that one must not feed oneself chiefly on pickles and tinned meats, or give a young baby tea and bread.

Next, my body wants proper clothing. If I waste my money on smart hats and curling pins, or on beer and tobacco, and have no money to buy proper boots which fit my feet and keep the wet out, I am not treating my body properly.

My body needs fresh air and plenty of water. Do I take care to open my windows? Am I particular to wash all over at least once a week? No one *can* be healthy who does not scrub all over pretty often, and wonders can be done with a bit of flannel, a pailful of hot water, a basin and a bit of soap. And my body wants healthy exercise. It is good for boys to join clubs where they can learn to play football, to bicycle. So with girls. If I can learn to ride a bicycle, or to dance, or to join a class for drilling, I shall find probably it will do me much good, but I can get any amount of exercise in scrubbing a room, and in cleaning grates and pots, and in washing clothes. Now, does all this seem as if it had nothing to do with religion? Indeed, it has much to do with religion. If I can cook a plain, good dinner for my father, or husband, or brother, that is a real bit of good work. If I can keep myself sweet and clean, am I not fresher and fitter to do my work, to praise God? If I break all the laws of health, if I neglect to open my

windows, to use soap and water, if I eat foolishly, can I wonder if I have headaches, if often I feel I can't get up and say my Prayers? So let me to-day think how I can offer all my bodily life to God. How I can try to keep myself in health and how I can help others to keep themselves in health. (A boy who learns to use his hands can often do a little bit of carpentering work in his home, and make and keep that home a sweeter, healthier place.) I must try and learn about health. If I belong to the G.F.S., or to a Club, or to the Mothers' Union, or the Boys' Brigade, I can easily ask some older friend to put me in the way of learning simple things about health.

That every one should know about fresh air, food, sleep, drains, and so on. Of course I am not thinking now of the dreadful sins of the body, which more than anything make us unready for the Service of God. Please God, I do know that anything like drunkenness or impurity do indeed "war against the soul".

Fathers and Mothers and Teachers can do so much to help little children to be ready in their bodies to serve God. If they will teach them modest ways, if they will take pains about food, if they will see the little ones go early to bed, if they try to keep them healthy and clean.

So, if I have anything to do with little children, I can do such a great work for God, if I help the little ones in the matter of their bodily health.

"Conformed to His Own likeness
May we so live and die,
That in the grave our bodies
In holy peace may lie.
And at the Resurrection
Forth from those graves may spring,
Like to the glorious Body
Of Christ, our Lord and King." (605.)

Thought IV.

"That we, being ready both in body and in soul."

Text.—"And the God of Peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 23).

I have been thinking of how I can make my body ready to serve God.

And now I go on to my soul.

Of course, I know the chief ways of making my soul ready is having God the Holy Ghost dwelling in me and joining me on to Jesus. And, indeed, I must not forget that it is only the Holy Spirit Who can make all the things I do for my own or another's body really good for the soul.

Of course, for one who is trying to please God, the Holy Communion is the great way of being ready.

No one who neglects Holy Communion can be *ready*, and the same can be said about Prayer and reading my Bible; I cannot be ready to serve God without these. But there are several bad habits which perhaps do not seem as if they were sins, which will make me unready in soul.

One is a habit of overmuch talk. Do I find I like chattering, discussing people and things? Then I ought to watch. Do I gossip, do I repeat little tales about the Clergy, or about richer people than myself? Do I waste time in reading papers which profess to tell the doings and sayings of great people? Do I like to go and *stare* at a wedding or a funeral when I know nothing about the people who are being married or buried? (to go into a church at such times and never kneel down to say a prayer is indeed a sad and unworthy thing for a Christian to do).

Do I tell people what other people have said about them?

Do I carry tales about the house in which I live? Well, this puts my soul into an unready state. No one who is overfond of talking, and of gossip, can be very, very much given to quiet Prayer and thought, and such habits are really dangerous and should be prayed against.

But there is another bad habit. Some quite good people never take any trouble to store their minds with good thoughts. They never read for pleasure anything but newspapers, or dreadful, trashy stories. God has given us minds for Him; if I, for instance, am fond of reading, I shall try to read really good books. If I belong to a G.F.S., or a Club, or a Guild, I shall be helped to choose. I can begin reading what may seem a little dull or hard, but by degrees I shall find I get to care for some, if not for all, really good books by good authors; if I can get to care for Poetry, I may indeed be thankful. Why? Because to have one's mind stored with noble and good thoughts will keep bad things out, and one will be ready to serve God.

Again, a habit of always being inclined to *suspect* other people takes away much of the readiness to serve God by being kind to those among whom we live. Yet how common this is. Of course, unhappily, one does not always feel able to trust people, but one should not be always fancying people are going to get the better of one, or to cheat one, or to say something unkind about one.

And, again, a habit of overmuch care for pleasure is apt to make one unready to serve God by self-denial. Do I care much for excitement? Do I, for instance, like my Club very much on dancing nights and not at all on working evenings, or do I bet or gamble for the sake of excitement? If I do find I care very, very much for pleasure, let me pray God to show me if I care overmuch. For there are many habits which quite good people hardly count as sins which are nevertheless hindering the work of God and making the soul *unready*.

"Take my soul and body's powers;
Take my memory, mind and will,
All my goods and all my hours,
All I know and all I feel,
All I think, or speak, or do;
Take my heart; but make it new." (636.)

THOUGHT V.

"That we, being ready both in body and in soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done."

Text.—"GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS" (Ephes. v. 20).

Cheerfully. That is what I will think of, please God, to-day.

First of all, I must do the things God would have me do without grudging my service.

It is *possible* for a person who has been converted, and who is in some sense a Disciple, to try and get off with as little as possible.

"I must go to Communion sometimes, but it's such a bother to get up early, I can't do it very often." "I must go to Church sometimes, but it's so nice to go for a walk. I can't go to Church every Sunday." "It is such a bother saying one's prayers on one's knees, I can say them in bed."

"Of course, I want to be saved, but I don't want to be so very particular; I must have my fun." Well, all this is not *cheerful* Service. (It is possible, God is so good, so wonderfully merciful, He may accept the odds and ends of time and service some of His Redeemed give Him.) But, oh, the danger of this state of mind if it gets *more* grudging, not less!

Let me pray God to grudge Him nothing. If I begin by regular rule of life, and keep it because it is my duty, I

shall grow to love His Service, and it will be with me not "how often must I go to Holy Communion or to Church, but how often *may* I?"

How much can I do for my loving Father?

Again, cheerful service must make me cheerful in manner. A sad or grumbling or surly Christian is such a terrible stumbling-block. Do I try to be cheerful? Do I look at the bright side of things? Do I try, if I am a member of a Club, or a Branch of the G.F.S., or Mothers' Union, or anything of the sort, not to growl and grumble at every new arrangement, every new person who comes to work for that Club?

And in my home am I cheerful? How many men and boys show temper and sulkiness to their home people, how often girls are rude and disobliging to their mothers! How often women, who are really good, grumble at everything which happens to vex them, until their husbands and children are ready to fly out of doors anywhere.

It is much easier for some people to be bright than others, and it is one great reason for taking care of one's bodily health that our cheerfulness often depends on our bodies. If I am ever inclined to be desperately low-spirited without any reason, let me ask myself if I am not rather ill, and let me take measures to get well. If I am one of those people who are subject to ups and downs, and to fits of the "blues," I must pray for help to keep my fits to myself, to be sensible about my health, to try to think about other people, *not* myself; above all, to pray to God for the Gift of Joy. If I can be bright, it is such a help to others. To have a smile, a kind word, to be ready to be obliging, to laugh at small mischances, and never to let the weather put one in a temper, are all ways of doing those things He would have us do. Let me pray God to give me His Grace of Joy in daily life, to enjoy *treats*, beautiful skies, kind

people, nice books, to see Him in all these things and to thank Him. To think of something for which one *ought* to be thankful, when one is in the blues, will be a great help.

"When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awaking cries,
May Jesus Christ be praised:
Alike at work and prayer
To Jesus I repair;
May Jesus Christ be praised." (303.)

THOUGHT VI.

"May cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done."

Text.—"REDEEMING THE TIME" (Part of this week's Epistle).

I have so much to think of this week. Of Readiness, of care for the body, for the soul, of Cheerfulness, which will lead me to joyful service.

But there is one word more—Accomplish. What do I mean when I pray this prayer? To accomplish something means to finish it off, to do it, as it were, completely. Some men make up their minds to climb a high mountain, and in spite of dangers and toil and storms they succeed, and return, having *accomplished*, finished off the task.

Well, our Father sets each one of us, sets *me*, tasks to do for Him. Tasks that change as life goes on. But *the* great work is—what? Each of His children is to build up a character like Christ's, a character which *is* Christ.

That is—first to face my work. God gives me the first start. He gives me means of grace all through my life, but He also gives *me* my work to do.

And I must not allow myself to think that if my state of

life were different from what it is I could *be* better. For God arranges these outward circumstances. One person is poor, another rich, one has the work of married life, another is called to be single. In each case the Christian has to *use* the state of life to which he or she is called, and through the outward circumstances to build up character.

And that is what my text means, "Redeeming the time," that is, in other words, "Buy up the opportunity".

Now is my time. Am I using all the opportunities God gives me to serve Him? For the Christlike character is built up partly by conquering sin, partly by service. God sends to each of us, to *me*, opportunities. Do I use them? What are my opportunities? There is my work. Is it done as well as it can be done by me? There are the people I live among. Do I snatch opportunities of doing kind acts? Am I old enough to help little children?

Do I try to teach a child, who is thrown in my way, Bible stories or Prayers and Catechism? Do I help any one to come to Church or to Communion? Do I do any little offices. Should I be willing to give up my spare time to helping in my Club or in any Church work? As I grow older these opportunities increase. It may be that I shall have people under me—servants or workpeople. What endless opportunities I shall have. If it should be so, do let me remember to help these to be ready in body and soul for God's service. What sad stories I have read of the one little servant in a house where the mistress did not look upon her servant as her sister in Christ.

Let me remember that all need time and a decent place to themselves. If ever I have a young girl under me let me remember she needs care and love, and time to play, and time to say her prayers. Don't let me make it easy for myself to go to Communion and hard for her.

As I grow older let me remember that if I am head in

any way of a household I have opportunities for helping others.

First as to their bodies. Seeing that as far as I can keep it the food is wholesome and properly cooked, the rooms as clean as I can make them, and as far as I can see them the drains looked after. And—if I work with other people—I can be bold to speak out if the laws of health are broken. If too many people work in a room, or if precautions for safety are neglected, I must try and help people who are in this bad case, especially if I who read am a woman.

And all men and women who are the heads of families have endless opportunities to help their children.

Now as to the souls of others. If ever I am the head of a family, do let me try to help those who live with me to be good. The father and mother then can gather children around them and say the Lord's Prayer and one or more of the Collects, and so endless opportunities come to those who will use them. Ah, the joy of being allowed to feel that, in spite of one's sins, one has used opportunities God has given one. That one has tried to do the work He gives. What *can* I do to-day? Is there any one I can help, any kind thing I can do, any bit of service for God? My work, my trials, all give me opportunities for pleasing Him.

For cheerfulness will lead to Joy. A habit of checking grumbling, of constantly thanking God, will lead on to the Life of Praise.

"Be this, while life is mine,
My canticle Divine,
May Jesus Christ be praised:
Be this the eternal song
Through ages all along,
May Jesus Christ be praised." (303.)

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people Pardon."

Text.—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father" (1 S. John ii. 1).

To-day I go back to the great Truth (which I ought to think of again and again) that Forgiveness is brought to each soul as a Gift of God.

All Christians have the washing of Holy Baptism, and there comes to all a moment when each Christian feels his need of forgiveness.

And, as I have seen before, many baptised Christians wander away from God, and need a very decided turning back, coming as children to a Father, and saying "I have sinned".

Please God, I am *turned* to Him, but I ought to know that day by day I need forgiveness. This Prayer is meant to be prayed by a Christian who is *trying* to please God: "Grant to Thy *faithful* people".

Do I day by day feel my need? How do I get forgiveness? Why does God forgive? Because I am *in* Christ Through Him I can come to God.

Jesus at one given moment made Atonement for the sins of the whole world.

Our Lord has come as perfect man to show us what man could be, and by His Death He showed the wickedness of sin, and made amends for it. "Our Lord offered the offering of 'a perfect will,' a perfect obedience, a perfect endurance of other men's sins."

"Upon this human offering made by His Son in our manhood the Father looks down."[1]

And so I perhaps may just faintly understand how our Lord has made redeemed souls one with Himself. He has offered to God Himself as a perfect man, and God *will* forgive all who come to Him through Jesus, and are willing to be forgiven on *conditions*. Full free forgiveness, but on conditions.

1. That we will come into union—oneness with our Lord.

2. That we will obey Him and serve Him.

Now, do I accept God's forgiveness?

For it may be that I am tempted to be uncertain about that forgiveness, to be unwilling to take God at His Word.

Or it may be that I think Jesus suffered and died, and it will be all right for me to *say* I trust in Jesus. I thought of this some weeks ago, but I can never think too often how awful it is to think that Jesus lived, and died, and rose again, and *yet* I go on sinning. Now, if I am turned to God, I ought not to dwell too much on my past sins. God has forgiven me, and I have heard His message of forgiveness in Holy Communion. But I ought to grow in *horror* of sin. I ought to feel how much I need the cleansing Blood every day for my sins of temper, of laziness, or whatever it may be. Let me ask myself to-day:

[1] *Creed of a Christian*, p. 51.

Do I feel sin is terrible? Am I growing to hate my sins more?

On my knees let me pray before I go out to work:—

"Show me my sins, O Lord, but show me Thyself. Give me light and grace that I may see and hate in myself whatever in me is displeasing to Thee."

And if I who read these words am in any doubt as to my ever having turned to God, let me pray this prayer from my heart: "Grant me *pardon*".

"O come to the merciful Saviour Who calls you;
O come to the Lord Who forgives and forgets;
Though dark be the fortune on earth that befalls you,
There's a bright Home above where the sun never sets.

"O come then to Jesus, Whose Arms are extended
To fold His dear children in closest embrace;
O come, for your exile will shortly be ended,
And Jesus will show you His beautiful Face.

"Yes, come to the Saviour, Whose mercy grows brighter
The longer you look at the depth of His Love;
And, fear not! 'tis Jesus! and life's cares grow lighter
As you think of the Home and the Glory above.

"Have you sinn'd as none else in the world have before you?
Are you blacker than all other creatures in guilt?
Oh, fear not, and doubt not! the mother who bore you
Loves you less than the Saviour Whose Blood you have spilt!

"Come, come to His Feet, and lay open your story
Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of His Glory
And the joy of our Lord to be true to His Name." Amen.

Thought II.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace."

Text.—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 S. John i. 8-9).

If I feel, as please God I *do* feel, my need of cleansing from my frequent sins, how can I be sure that the Precious Blood of Jesus does cleanse me?

I must come to the Cross of Christ. I mean, I must kneel down and plead for forgiveness, because of Jesus; I kneel and pray because I feel I am sinful. If I feel I do not know my sins, I must remember that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to *convince* us of sin, that is, make us certain we are sinners. Now, how can I be sure God has forgiven? Our Father is so good to His children that He does not want to leave them in any doubt. He promises that the message of forgiveness shall be given to each penitent soul. When I kneel in Church at the Holy Communion, and hear those words, "Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Who of His goodness has promised forgiveness to all those that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him, have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins," and so on, that message is for *me*. If I really and truly have told out my sins to God when I am alone with Him, and really wish to forsake them, I can take these words home to my own soul, and go and kneel at the Heavenly Feast with full assurance that I am really forgiven. But the Branch of the Church to which I belong teaches that where a person cannot quiet his conscience—in other words, where a person feels

he or she is not fit to come to Holy Communion—he can come to a Minister of God's Word and receive the "benefit of Absolution," that is, the message of Forgiveness, which our Lord said that His Church by the mouth of her Ministers is to utter to penitent sinners. This is what we mean by *private* Confession. Confession is telling out sins, and must be done if we want to be forgiven. Private Confession is telling them in the presence of one of God's Ministers who are called Priests or Bishops (Bishops are Priests).

Now, if I who read these words am trying to serve God, if day by day I question myself and tell out my sins to God, if I come regularly to Holy Communion, I *need* not be anxious because I do not use private Confession. Every time I ask God to forgive me for Jesus' Sake I may be sure He does forgive me, and in the Holy Communion Christ comes to fill me with His Own Presence after I have heard again the words of forgiveness. But if a person is turning to God for the first time after years of neglect and of sin, he or she ought to ask the advice and help of one of God's Ministers.

And supposing a Christian, who has been Confirmed, been a Communicant, falls into deadly sin? A person who commits an act of impurity, of drunkenness, of long-continued malice against another, ought that person, who perhaps has not been leading a Christian life, to go back to Christian Fellowship without any advice, any Confession? No, if this should, alas, ever be my case, let me go and ask a Clergyman and tell him, even if there is no one terrible sin on my mind—only years of neglect of God. He will advise me, will tell me if I had better make a Confession in his presence, will show me how to confess to God at any rate. (If I do not know a Clergyman I can always speak to one after a service, and there are often notices in Churches when clergy are to be seen.)

Again, many people find that to use private Confession at regular times, once a year, once a quarter, or once a month, helps them in their fight against sin. If I feel this, God will give me the opportunity when He sees it is good for me. Only let me remember the message is from God, He forgives. In Absolution He sends, as it were, a message to each soul.

If ever I use private Confession let me pray God to make me feel how solemn a thing it is, and never, never use it without a deep sense of my sin, of God's mercy through Christ.

Never let me think I am better than other Christians *because* I use Confession; on the other hand, never let me mock at Christians who do use it. And always all through my life let me remember it is the Precious Blood which wins our Pardon.

"Glory be to Jesus,
Who, in bitter pains,
Poured for me the Life-blood
From His sacred veins.

"Grace and life eternal
In that Blood I find;
Blest be His compassion
Infinitely kind.

"Blest through endless ages
Be the precious stream,
Which from endless torments
Did the world redeem.

"Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the Blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries,

"Oft as it is sprinkled
On our guilty hearts,
Satan in confusion
Terror-struck departs;

"Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing
Make their glad reply.

"Lift ye then your voices;
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious Blood." Amen. (107.)

THOUGHT III.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace."

Text.—"IN CHRIST JESUS YE WHO SOMETIMES WERE FAR OFF ARE MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST" (Eph. ii. 13).

I am brought to God through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. I say "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" What is Forgiveness? Pardon. How can a sinner be forgiven? It is that "God will not impute his sin (that is, count his sins) to him". "God sees us and deals with us not as we are but as we are becoming." That is Forgiveness. "God forgives us what we have done amiss." "He reckons our sins as if they did not exist." "God is never tired of forgiving us in this way."

Now, do I understand this at all?

First, I must be quite sure God "has given me His grace of pardon and will give" (Hymn 252). And the life of a Christian means that as we go on getting nearer and nearer to God, we see how much in us has to be wiped out before God's work in us can be completed. It is because God has

forgiven us that we grow in sorrow for our sins. We are at home in our Father's House, and yet we are such wilful children.

Nor can I ever say "it's only a little sin, it's all right". What I ought to say is "God *has* forgiven me".[1]

"God *has* forgiven me, praised be His name, and yet look what I am whom He so long ago has pardoned. . . . How can it be that Jesus can call me His friend and take me to His Heart? O God, my God, whose pity has pardoned me, make me yet a miserable sinner, a little more worthy of Thy Cross."

Again, as I have seen before, I must never, never allow myself to think that being forgiven means being let off.

I may be forgiven, nay, I *am* forgiven, if I have confessed my sins and asked for forgiveness, but I may be punished. One sees that, in many cases, sins bring their own punishment. The drunkard or the impure person is often punished by lost health, lost credit; the jealous person by the loss of affection, and so on. Well, I must not be surprised if I find I have much to bear because of some sin of which I have repented. How should a really repentant person bear punishment? For instance, if he has told lies, and cheated, or committed dishonest acts, he must bear distrust and unjust suspicions without a single grumble, and so on. And if I am trying to lead a better life—if, for instance, I am trying to say my prayers more really, to be kinder to others, to be better—I mustn't be surprised if my old faults, my old bad habits, stand in my way. I must take the hindrances patiently as a bit of merciful punishment.

But I must never, never doubt that I am forgiven if only I am turned to God and if I confess my sins to Him.

One more thought. I may at present feel very little sorrow for sin. I must not let want of *feelings* distress me.

1 *Creed of a Christian*, pp. 55-57.

If I *do* try to find out where I do wrong, if I do confess my wrongdoings to my Father, if I do come to Holy Communion, I shall find that my sorrow for sin grows.

What I should ask myself is—Am I really uneasy when I do wrong, do I always ask God to forgive me? Is doing wrong the thing I most fear or hate? Do I put "doing what I ought first and doing what I like last"? Then I can believe I am growing in that sorrow for sin, that tenderness of *conscience*, which are the marks of a true Christian.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend.

"Here I rest, for ever viewing
Mercy poured in streams of Blood;
Precious drops, my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God.

"Truly blessed is the station,
Low before His Cross to lie,
Whilst I see Divine compassion
Beaming in His languid Eye.

"Lord, in ceaseless contemplation
Fix my thankful heart on Thee,
Till I taste Thy full salvation,
And Thine unveiled glory see." Amen. (109.)

Thought IV.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace."

Text.—"Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Peace. First Pardon, then Peace.

Do I know at all what Peace means?

I suppose it is that deep sense that I have a Father in Heaven to Whom I have given myself and Who cares for me.

That I have a Saviour, an Elder Brother, a Master Who gives me to Himself, Who feeds my soul with nothing less than Himself.

That I have a Guide dwelling in me Who will day by day pour His Gifts into my Soul—even the Holy Ghost. This sense of *safety* of being sheltered can and does come to Christians who "abide in Christ". I must not expect it to come just all at once, but little by little God's Peace will come to me as I give up my will to His Will. I may in His mercy feel some of that Peace early in my Christian life. At the Holy Communion as I kneel and pray His Peace comes to me, and in these most precious moments I learn what it is to be His. Some souls experience that peace when they hear the message of forgiveness: they rise penitent, full of sorrow and shame, but with a sense of *Peace* with God. And that peace will come often if we wait for it in times of quiet prayer, of reading the Bible by ourselves. Now, what does this all mean? Is it anything unreal? No. It means that I need *not* be frightened. I am most unworthy, most sinful, but I am in Jesus. Therefore if I am called to die to-night, or to-morrow, or if I am called to wait until I am very old, I am quite safe so long as I cling to Jesus.

I may have great troubles. They are very hard to bear, but—my Lord bears them *in* me.

I may have difficult work to do; my Lord will give me strength.

I may be very lonely, yet my Lord is always with me.

Now, all this is most true. So let me daily pray for pardon, let me daily fight against sin, let me daily try to

please God, and by degrees peace will come. One sees that look of peace on many faces, one knows it has been won by hard battles with the world, the flesh, and the devil. So, let me fight, let me pray; and let me remember those great words, "Neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord". Amen.

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The Blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

"Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

"Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' Bosom nought but calm is found.

"Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.

"Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the Throne.

"Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

"It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to Heaven's perfect peace." Amen.

(537.)

Thought V.

"That they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind."

Texts.—"The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 St. John i. 7).

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, and hath made us kings and

PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER, TO HIM BE GLORY" (Rev. i. 5-6).

And now I have come to the reason *why* God in His Mercy gives us, gives me, Pardon and Peace.

That I may be loosed, or cleansed, from *all* my sins and serve Him.

For sin may be looked upon in two ways: First, it is a chain which binds us. I know if any one yields to sin continually how the bad habits seem to bind him captive. Take the drunkard, who knows he can't resist. So it is with less open sins. I may be myself captive with sins of my tongue, of my temper, or my sloth. But He will loose me. Nay, He has. If I will, I can escape. But sin also stains our souls. We are clothed in our Baptism in the white Robe of Purity, at each Absolution the Lord's Blood washes us again from the stains which sin makes. Do I not feel how sin stains my soul? I hear a wicked story. Do I not feel as if something black had come to my soul? I can see black stains, but what does God see? But that is just what God does not see if I am turned, if I have fallen at Jesus' Feet and told out my sins, and am now *in* Him, living His Life. He sees my soul as it will be at the Last Day, clothed in my Saviour's Holiness, and day by day and week by week I may come and have my stains washed off. Just as our Lord told His disciples that they were clean, and needed not to wash, save their feet, so it is with a converted Christian. He is washed, he is forgiven, but day by day he, in spite of himself, gets stained by sins, and needs fresh washing that he may serve God with a quiet mind.

Ah, yes, not that I may lead an easy life, but that I may serve Him joyfully. For I am a Priest to offer Him the offering of my soul and body. Every Christian is a Priest, though some have as it were a greater degree of Priesthood,

and stand not *instead* of the rest but to *represent* the rest, not to be instead of them. And if I can but rise to my calling, if I can answer to His Grace, I shall find my life whether it be one of hard work, whether it be in married life, whether it be one of bodily sickness and sorrow, whatever it is, it passes into one Act of Worship. Ah, is this too high? No. I may feel very, very far off this life of Joyful service, but if I *want* to live such a life God will let me in His time.

The stains of old sins will be washed, the Peace of knowing what it is to be forgiven *will* come to me, the gladness of knowing that alike in Church, in Prayer, in hard work, in bearing crosses, in small duties for others, disappointments, unkindnesses, sorrow, sickness, helplessness, I am doing Him service. With a quiet mind? Yes, I need not fret or worry about anything. I must do my best each day to live so that if it were my last I can meet Him with a quiet mind. Let me begin. Let me try to praise Him with my lips and in my life. Let my heart be as it were a choir of joyful thanksgiving, let my hands and feet move in His Service, my lips be swift to say words of kindness, to sing His Praise, so will life teach me what Death will open to me: the Kingdom of Heaven which He opened to all believers.

"In Heaven's Eternal Bliss
The loveliest strain is this,
May Jesus Christ be praised:
Let earth, and sea, and sky
From depth to height reply,
May Jesus Christ be praised." (303.)

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Household the Church in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Household the Church in continual godliness."

Text.—"The Household of Faith" (Gal. vi. 10).

Last week I had to think of the life of each Christian, of my own life, of my forgiveness, of my Peace, of my service.

I have again to think of this great Family or household to which I belong—the Church of God.

God's Family is to be like Him—Godly. Now, on earth one hears such and such a family are so good, or so clever, or so industrious. What does that mean?

That the members of that family are, one by one, good, industrious, or clever, and so give their family that character by which it is known. So must it be with God's great Family. It is known as "The Holy Catholic Church".

Its members are to be set apart—dedicated to God.

Therefore never let me think that because I am poor, or not very learned, or because I work very hard for my living,

that because of all this I am of no consequence. Not at all. Each Christian is helping or hindering God's Work for His Church. The Household of God is to be in the midst of this world as a witness for God. Is that so? Yes, thank God, I can see that God's Holy Church goes on, grows, spreads among men.

But does the Church do all it might? No.

Why not? Because Christians are not living the lives they ought to live. Because they are often selfish, unkind, impure, worldly. It is not want of money, it is not the opposition of the world which hinders Christ's kingdom; it is the unworthy lives of so-called Christians. Now, do not let me think this has nothing to do with me.

Am I a Christian? Do I go to Holy Communion? Then let me try with all my heart to remember that I cannot live to myself. If I am trying to live a Christian life, then I am helping my little corner of the Church; if I, by my life, make other people think Christians are no better than other people, I am hindering God's Work.

But there is something else to think of. I must pray for the whole Household of God everywhere, all over the world. Not that God's Household may be rich, or that it may please the world, but that it may be Holy. And, as I grow older and have to listen to different people's opinions, I must remember that God's Church is to be Holy, and that therefore it must never tamper with God's Laws to please the world. For instance, about Holy Marriage. Each member of God's Household must be ready to hold fast to the truth that "those whom God has joined together are *not* to be put asunder by man". This is only an example. Never let me think that things have nothing to do with me. Men must rule, women must influence men; all Christians must make up their minds on such questions, and ask "What does our Lord say?"

"May Thy Church our shelter be,
Ark in mercy built by Thee,
Refuge from the storms of life,
From the wearing toil and strife,
Hear us, we beseech Thee." (624.)

THOUGHT II.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Household the Church in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name."

Text.—"THE CHURCH OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD" (Acts xx. 28).

"O Lord, we beseech Thee, to keep Thy Household the Church in continual godliness."

Thy household. Thy family. This is such an encouraging word for me if ever I feel lonely.

A great writer has called the Church "a Home for the Lonely". Last week I thought of the blessed gifts God has for us in His Household. Of forgiveness, of peace, of daily cleansing, of joyful service.

Now let me take home to myself that God promises to give us His gifts in and through the Church. He does not say to each single person, "Repent and be converted, and then look round and see what body of Christians you wish to join". No, He says, "Enter My Family by the gate of Holy Baptism; if you have been baptised return to God by the means the Church provides by My command".

God promises endless gifts in His Church. Now, I need not trouble myself about other people who are outside the Church. "God is not tied to Sacraments," but *we* are, and for those who have never been taught the way of Salvation

we may be sure God will provide some other way. But for us. We *have* been taught. God has provided His Household with food. In it all can be found without any fear of mistake. His great Gifts. Forgiveness, and help, and food for the Soul, and Gifts of the Spirit, and blessings on the married life, help in the dark valley. All these are ours. How disobedient, how presumptuous to say "we will go our own way".

But I may sometimes be perplexed by quite good people who come to me and say, "There are so many different kinds of Christians: come with me to-day"; and then some one else comes and says, "The Church of which the Pope is the head is the only Church".

What am I to think? Well, if I will take the trouble, I can easily learn by reading a simple book such as *What am I to Believe?* or *The Creed of the Christian.* But let me remember this. Our Lord set up a Kingdom on Earth. His Apostles preached it and set apart others to take their place. Therefore, if a set of Christians set aside the Ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, neglect the Sacraments, one cannot feel that these Christians are exactly walking in the way our Lord laid down. If people perplex me by telling me that *only* Roman Catholics belong to the one Household, I must remember that this Church to which I belong, "my Mother of whom I was born to God," *has* the Threefold Ministry—the Holy Sacraments—and that to this part of the Church God has given many blessings. I am probably not very learned. Let me simply go on in the part of the Household God has placed me, and thankfully accept His Gifts.

"If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord." Amen. (634.)

THOUGHT III.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Household the Church in continual godliness."

Text.—"THE CHURCH OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD" (Acts xx. 28).

Let me think to-day. Do I care for this great Family of God, this Household?

First—it is or ought to be my Home for my soul.

Do I take home to myself how the gifts of God come to me through the Church? Then, do I long for others to share the warmth, and shelter, and gladness of the Father's House?

Then, again, do I care for the other members of the "Household of Faith"? First, I must of course learn to love those who are in the same little corner of our Father's household. Those who kneel at the same Altar, those who minister to our souls.

By degrees I must learn to care for others beyond our little corner. I must learn to be glad when I hear of far distant parts of the great Household—Africa, India, Japan, and many more.

And by degrees I shall learn to love to pray for all members of God's Household; I shall take some special Prayers for that Household to Holy Communion.[1]

Again, if ever I feel lonely, or am ill, let me remember how everywhere countless prayers are going up to God for "all sick persons," for any who are "afflicted in mind or body".

Again, let me remember Our Lord's great Love for the Church. It is to be His Bride. Is it not terribly sad that so many Christians care so little for His Work? For He came to prepare for Himself a Holy Church.

And this depends on individuals.

Even now I probably can help on God's Work by *not*

1 Prayers for others are found in *nearly all* books of Private Prayers

giving in to some opinion, some custom which is fashionable in my set of friends, and which is wrong. Let me to-day ask myself: Do I pray for myself, and for the Church of God, that we may be kept in continual likeness to God?

One more thought: I must pray that the Church of God may always be guided by God to care *only* for goodness—Godliness—not for money, or for pleasing the world, or for getting in large numbers of half-hearted Christians, but for goodness, and all that goodness means.

"Great Three in One, Great One in Three,
Our hymns of prayer receive,
And teach us all from sin to flee,
And live as we believe;
So, pure in faith, our thoughts and speech
And acts that faith shall own;
So shall we to Thy Presence reach,
And know as we are known." Amen. (216.)

Thought IV.

"That through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities."

Text.—"And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye" (1 Peter iii. 13-14).

Adversity: I have thought of this before. Things that are against us. And to-day we pray for God's whole Family, that it may be free from things which hinder its work. But we cannot always see what is against the work of the Church. Only we must pray.

What do I know of adversity to the Church?

It might be that Christians were ordered to do something that is wrong, or to give up something that is right. There have been such things in bygone years; there may

be such things again. In France, Christians have had, and do have, much to bear—for instance, Christian Priests have to serve in the Army, it is very difficult for people who are schoolmasters or who are in any way working for the Government to be outwardly religious, if they are, they are often persecuted in small ways.

Now, all this seems adversity, and it is right to pray that such things may not happen to us in any place belonging to England. But sometimes this sort of adversity really stirs up Christians to be more earnest, to love Christ more, and then it is not really adversity at all. And the text comes in here. No one can harm a Christian really. But I must take home to myself that if things which seem to be against us happen either to the whole Church, or to the members of it—to myself—they are meant to be blessings.

Perhaps in His mercy God has shielded me from anything like Persecution. But if it should come? If I were even laughed at, or scolded, or hurt, or made to lose money, or happiness, for the Sake of Jesus, I should be blessed. Sometimes what our blessed Lord says comes quite true: "Whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it" (S. Luke ix. 24). The word life covers many things. I may lose money or my place because I will not cheat. I may suffer a great deal, yet others are encouraged by me, and, it may be, I shall find I am trusted. But people may have to suffer and *not* have it made up to them in this life.

It may be that there will come times when my heart will sink. Evil seems so strong; the good, the pure, the honest seem to go to the wall; the wicked, those who cheat, those who give way to evil lust, seem happy. That has happened to Christians in every age, from the Prophets of the Old Testament to our own days.

If such a time comes, let me remember the thought of to-day. It is not for ever. This adversity seems against

us, against the Church, against me. But God is behind it, God will not let evil prosper for ever.

If only I am faithful, if only I go on trying, if only I cling to Him, He will not let me have anything to bear which is too hard, and the morning will break on my night of weeping, and I shall see the Lord standing on the shore. Sometimes in this life He sends us relief, but if He does not, this life is very short, and Eternity is very long. All the adversity is meant to prepare us for that Eternal Life.

"Ye fearful Saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head." (373.)

Thought V.

"And devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name."

Text.—"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephes. ii. 10).

Why has God taken so much trouble? Why did our Lord die? Why does the Church exist? Simply to draw men and women to God and make them *good*. Everything God gives me, from Holy Baptism onwards, is for this—to make me holy. To be holy is at last to be happy, and God knows that no one can be happy for ever who is not holy.

That is why, in the Family of God, each member of it, as soon as he begins to feel that he is *saved*, that he is in Christ, longs at once to do something for Christ, to draw others to Christ. That is why the Church has so many kinds of works, Sermons in Church, Classes, Men's and Boys' Clubs and Guilds, Boys' Brigades, Mothers' Unions, Girls' Clubs, and so on. They are all good works to help people to be good amidst the temptations of this world. Do I take this to myself? First, if I belong to any Club

or Union inside the Church, do I think it's just to get some more fun that I join, or do I feel that because I belong, I must try and belong thoroughly, and be as keen about the Bible Class as about games or dancing?

For it is no use having all these Clubs and Classes if they are not to help people who are turned to God, or who wish to learn about God, to be better. It is not the business of the Church to amuse people, but it is her work to help people to be good, and giving them safe pleasures is a way of helping them.

Then, do I feel and know I must do God devout service? *Devout*—that is, earnest—with all my heart? I have often during these weeks thought of my work, and of my life, and how I can serve God. Let me try to be less selfish; let me *wish* to do something, some bit of work specially for God. What can I do? I might try to care for some Mission abroad, and save, say, a penny a month, or work for it. I might teach some child about God. I might go and read to a sick person. I might do some bit of cleaning for a neighbour. If I belong to a Guild or a Club of any kind, my friends there will put me in the way of some tiny bit of service for God. Only about all these I must pray, and prayer itself is one of those good works I can do. If ever I were laid by on a bed of sickness I could pray a great deal for others, for Missions, for my own people, my own clergyman, my own parish. At all times, in all places, we can do Him Service.

"Dear Master, Thine the Glory
Of each recovered soul,
Ah, who can tell the story
Of love that made us whole.

"Not ours, not ours the merit,
Be Thine alone the praise,
And ours a thankful spirit
To serve Thee all our days." (632.)

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O God, our Refuge and Strength, who art the Author of all godliness, be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"O God, our Refuge and Strength."

Texts.—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. xlvi. 1).

"The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms" (Deut. xxxiii. 27).

"A refuge in times of trouble" (Ps. ix. 9).

Let me think to-day not of my sins but of God, of the Father Who promises strength, such comfort to His children.

Troubles have either come to me or they will come. Let me think of what God is to His children, so that when the dark days come I may know Him and be ready to run to Him. "Our Refuge," that is, a shelter. I know in a storm how one runs for shelter. In heat one needs shelter also. There is a wonderful text which speaks of One Who is "a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat" (Isa. xxv. 4). There *are* storms. Perhaps a great storm. Something which changes all our life. Ah, then, if only we can fling ourselves on God He will give us strength, oh,

such wonderful strength. Strength to bear our sorrow, to pray, to be gentle, to praise Him. None but those who have borne the weight of a great sorrow and have felt "the Hand of God stretched out to meet them in the darkness," none but these can know what the Goodness of God is.

And then may come a storm and fiery heat of persecution. Different people are tried in different ways, but many have to bear anger, mocking, pain for Jesus.

Sometimes a Christian has to bear worse things. Even lately a number of Christians, men and women, have laid down their lives for Jesus Christ in China. Native African boys have done the same. Oh, don't let me think such storms are too terrible. Behind all the Storm is God, Who gives strength as His servants need it.

He will be my refuge in sorrow if I will trust Him. He will make me strong to bear taunts, or bullying, or pain, or —death for Him.

Once more. Death will come to me some time. I do not know when or how. God will be my Refuge then. If I have to bear pain and sickness first, He will hold me. I shall feel His arms round me, He will "make all my bed in my sickness," He will be with me, He will send His Holy Angels to minister to me in the last awful moments when earth is fading away. Then my trembling Soul will fall into the Hands of a most merciful God and Father. Yes, but why merciful? Because that Soul is Christ's, is washed in His Blood, made Holy by His Holy Spirit.

Ah, then, have I a right to feel God *is* my Refuge?

That is the one great question.

"Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see:
O Thou Who changest not, abide with me.

"I need Thy Presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my Guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

"I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness:
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me.

"Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me." Amen. (27.)

THOUGHT II.

"Who art the Author of all godliness."

Text.—"GOD IS LOVE; AND HE THAT DWELLETH IN LOVE DWELLETH IN GOD, AND GOD IN HIM" (1 S. John iv. 16).

Once before, in the thoughts for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity, I have thought of God as the beginning, the author of godliness, that is, of all good things.

To-day let me think what is perfect godliness, that is, likeness to God. What is perfect goodness?

It is the Life of Love. S. Paul tells us that Love is the greatest of all gifts, because it will never pass away, and S. John says "God is Love".

God gives us many gifts of the Spirit; we are to bear many fruits. But then many of them are needed only for our

life in the Church on earth. We shall not need patience or long-suffering in Heaven. But we shall be full of Love if we ever get to Heaven.

So we must lead that life here. God begins it, He loves us first, and then we love Him. He puts into our hearts the beginnings of Love to Him. He stirs up Love to our brothers and sisters. So let me ask myself if I really try to answer to His Love. Do I pray that He will help me to live the life of love? Such a life as our Lord describes in the Sermon on the Mount, as S. Paul speaks of in chapter xiii. of 1 Corinthians.

And, again, every bit of goodness comes from God. So, if I see some one who is perhaps leading a bad life doing some kind act, some brave deed, I may be quite sure God is helping that person. People seem often very far from God, and yet all the while He is leading them on, because they have love for, say, a child, a mother, a friend, Love which makes them give up pleasure and comfort, nay, life sometimes, for one they love. Well, no one who lives in that way, who is unselfish, is really far from God. God will teach that loving heart here or hereafter. For all love comes from God, and is a shadow of His Love.

But, of course, this only applies to people who have never learned about God. I who have been taught must learn to lead the Life of Love in the best sense of the words. Doing what God would have me do.

And just because all goodness, all love, come from God, I must never think any one can get real goodness, real love, real godliness, except from Him. If I want to get any one to give up a bad life, to become respectable, or sober, or honest, I must try to bring that person to God, to Christ. There are many helps provided to *help* people to keep out of bad ways, but nothing will cure a person of sin, will give him goodness, but a change, conversion, the grace of God.

"Father, Who didst fashion me
Image of Thyself to be,
Fill me with Thy Love Divine,
Let my every thought be Thine." (34.)

Thought III.

"Be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church."

Text.—"Praying at all seasons in the Spirit" (Ephes. vi. 18).

I have thought a good deal about the Church and about Prayer. Let me to-day just take *one* word. Devout. What does it mean to pray devoutly or to be "devout" in Church?

It means to be earnest, to be doing something with all one's heart. One hears of a person being "devoted" to his wife or his mother. That means that he loves her with all his heart. So, to pray *devoutly* means that we pray with all our hearts.

Let me think of my Service to God in Church.

One sometimes hears said, "The people at so-and-so are very devout". Or, alas, "The people at so-and-so are very indevout, very careless". Now, if I want to please God, to be a Christian, I must pray that He will teach me to pray devoutly. And it is good for me to have rules about my outward behaviour in Church. It is possible to be very, very far from God even when one seems to be very devout, but it is almost impossible for people who are made up of bodies and souls not to let their bodily behaviour tell on their souls. If I loll about, stare, giggle in Church, it is next door to a miracle if my soul is in the least bit in earnest. And, so that I may train myself in the Life of Prayer, let me make some very simple rules.

First. Let me try always to get to Church *in time* and kneel down and say a short prayer. If I don't know one I could open my Prayer Book and read the Collect for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

Next. When I am in Church let me try not to stare at any one, least of all the clergy or choir. Then, if I possibly can, I must *kneel* during the prayers. If I do get tired I can sit for a minute or two, but I shall probably find I can kneel perfectly well—if I don't *think* I can't.

Then I must try and follow the service and join in the singing. It is such a good plan to follow the Lessons in my Bible and look them out beforehand. I can for one penny buy a *Churchman's Calendar*,[1] which will tell me what the Lessons are for every Sunday and every day, and I can also find what they are at the beginning of the Prayer Book. Then at the end I should say another short prayer—I can look out another Collect: the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity is very good for that time.

These rules will help me when I go to Morning or Evening Prayer.

But for Holy Communion: it is very, very important I should take great care to be devout. It is so sad to see people at that Blessed Service wasting *any* time in looking about. I must try very hard to be in Church a few minutes before the Celebration begins. I ought to kneel at once, take off my gloves, and open my book of prayers, and begin to pray. I shall find it always best to have a book for use at Holy Communion, such as *Helps to Worship* or *The Christian's Manual* or *Before the Throne;* and there are many others. Then I should try never to look about. While other people are making their Communions I should try and pray. I shall find prayers

[1] Published by Mowbray.

in my book, and lovely hymns, especially 322. If I am sure I can't kneel all the time, of course I must sit, but I must be most careful to keep my eyes fixed on my book, and always to kneel during the Consecration Prayer. When I go up to the Altar, I must be careful to kneel quietly and reverently; if I wear a hat never to let it touch the Chalice, never to wipe my lips, and so on. All little things, perhaps, but all most helpful. I should be careful not to hurry out of Church; always to wait until the Clergy have left the Altar. And one thing I must remember, that if I try to be devout I help other people. *If* I am careless or irreverent, I hinder other people, and distress good people. These rules will help me. I shall little by little learn to pray, learn to worship, and, by-and-by, these sort of outward habits will become second nature, and I shall know the joy of Praise.

"Make Thy servants, though unworthy, temples of Thy grace to be;
Let us not in flesh or spirit prove disloyal unto Thee,
But in dedicated service praise Thy name adoringly." (602.)

Thought IV.

"And grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually."

Texts.—"For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (S. Matt. xviii. 20).

"Golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the Saints" (Rev. v. 8).

Our Lord tells us there is a special blessing on the prayers of those who pray *together*. That is why so much of the Morning and Evening Service is made up of *Prayer*.

And so I must try to take home to myself that all of us in Church are praying *together*. I, if I let my thoughts wander, or if I do not pray at all, am hindering the great Work of the Church.

The Family of God, His Church, has many kinds of works, but one great work is that of offering up continually the sacrifice, the offering of daily, ceaseless Prayer to God.

It does not make any difference whether just a few, only one or two, meet for the daily Prayers, or even if the Priest says the daily services alone. The Church is offering up her prayers for her children, and therefore if I am ever able by a day or two's extra spare time to drop into Church for these Services, let me remember I am joining in this great work of Prayer. And it is a beautiful thought that those of us Christians who have very little time for Church on week days are being helped by the great Voice of Prayer and Praise which never ceases. Yes, let it come over me as I am hard at work, perhaps among sounds of anger, or evil speaking, or of wickedness—just close by me, perhaps in a Church near at hand or from a sick bed, rises the Prayer of the Saints for us, for me, and I must remember that each Christian is a Priest, that is, a person set apart to God to offer sacrifices.

And one of these sacrifices is Prayer, Praise.

This will help me in Church. I must join in the great work. God might miss *my* voice!

There is a lovely poem which tells how a little boy "Morning, Evening, Noon, and Night" sang praise to God. And then a wish came to the boy that he might praise God as Pope from the great Dome of the Church at Rome. Well, an Angel heard this wish and it was granted, and the Angel took the boy's place, and the boy became Pope.

And one day he remembered his old life, and how sick-

ness had come on him as a boy, and he rose from that sickness and became a Priest, and now he was Pope!

"To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the Angel burned."

And the great Angel told him that it had been a mistake to take him from his craftsman's cell, that God wanted the praise of the workman as of the Pope.

"Go back and praise again,
The early way while I remain."

So the Pope went back to his work, and the Angel took his place, and years passed by, and then "they sought God side by side".

Perhaps I can understand this a little. God wants the praise of all in His place. So if I am working hard, still let me join my voice as I have opportunity to the great Voice of Prayer which rises up to God.

The hymn which follows will make me understand this better:—

"The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at Thy behest;
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

"We thank Thee that Thy Church unsleeping,
While earth rolls onward into light,
Through all the world her watch is keeping,
And rests not now by day or night.

"As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

"The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

"So be it, Lord! Thy Throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;
Thy kingdom stands and grows for ever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway." Amen.

(477.)

THOUGHT V.

"And grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually."

Text.—"IF TWO OF YOU SHALL AGREE ON EARTH AS TOUCHING ANYTHING THAT THEY SHALL ASK, IT SHALL BE DONE FOR THEM OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN" (S. Matt. xviii. 19).

"We may obtain effectually." I have thought of Prayer to God, offered by the whole Church of God, how these prayers which we offer for ourselves and for each other rise up day and night. And it is Prayer in common, that is, Prayer shared by the whole Church, I am thinking of. Not so much of Prayers said each one for himself, of which perhaps no one but God knows. It is rather of the Prayers of God's great family. I must remember that though I may not be always, or indeed often, able to go to Church, I can always, if I will, join myself in spirit with those prayers. People who are ill often do that. Saying the Collect for the week every day is a way of joining oneself on with other Christians' prayers, and so, of course, the way of ways is the Lord's Prayer. Our Lord seems to teach us that united Prayer brings a great blessing. God wills to give

us great blessings, but He means us to get these blessings by our efforts in Prayer.

Do I take this home to myself? Do I join into Church Prayers with all my heart. For instance, the Litany. Is it a joy to me to pray for others in that great Prayer?

This Blessing of united Prayer is realised very much by real Christians. People who work in Missions abroad wish people at home to pray for them and their needs regularly. All Guilds and Church Societies ask their members to pray one particular prayer. Do I do this if I belong to any of these?

And it is wonderful, most wonderful, how effectual God makes Prayer. That means, He allows us to see the effects of united Prayer.

A Mission wants more workers, the people who belong to it, or care for it, pray for more workers, and in time more workers are sent. This is only one example of how God hears united Prayer offered in Christ's Name.

And I must not be afraid to ask for others' Prayers. If in Guilds, for instance, it is the custom for members to write down some special blessing for which they wish, and send it to the Head of the Guild. Then those special petitions are read at meetings or sent round to each member and all pray for this blessing without knowing which member specially wants it.

It is right also to ask the Prayers of the Church for any one who is ill. As I grow in my Christian life I shall learn more and more the blessings of Prayer and of Prayer in Common, that is, Prayer shared in by others.

"Was there ever kindest Shepherd
Half so gentle, half so sweet,
As the Saviour Who would have us
Come and gather at His Feet?" (634.)

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Collect.

O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's Sake, our Blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Thought I.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences."

Text.—"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (S. Matt. xviii. 6, 7).

I must think to-day of what is meant by *offences*.

It means, in our Lord's words, the faults, or the actions by which we make other people stumble, or by which we hurt other people's souls.

From the Greek word for "offend," or "cause to stumble," comes our English word "scandal".

I have heard of such and such a thing being "a perfect scandal". And it usually means, alas, that the person who is causing the scandal ought to know better. "It's a

perfect scandal how that mother ill-treats her children." Why? Because mothers are always supposed to love their children.

And so the outward faults and sins of Christians are offences, occasions to make others stumble, scandals. Do I take this home to myself? This Prayer is meant for Christians who are turned to God. Can I ever remember making those whom our Lord calls "His little ones" to stumble?

Think what it is to set a bad example of ill-temper, or greediness, or immodest behaviour to a little child.

Let me think again. Suppose a person, one who has been for some time a Communicant, makes friends with a younger one. The younger one is anxious to be good, but the older one says, "It's no harm to do this or that, to bet, to go to a public-house and sit drinking, to go on a Sunday excursion," and the young Christian is led away by the older.

(But it's not only to His own people our Lord gives the warning. He seems to say that it is the most awful sin to lead others wrong, above all, to hurt children's souls. So, whether I can feel I am trying to serve God or not, let me be sure I shall suffer for it if I teach children evil ways, or destroy their innocence.)

And the outside people, the people who perhaps are not converted, are made to stumble by Christians' sins.

If I who read these words am trying to serve God I must remember what my example can do. As I saw last week, if I am *not* devout in Church I hurt other people. And so on, if I am just as careless, just as eager for pleasure, and reckless when I am enjoying myself, as others who have never heard these things, how I shall hurt others' souls.

And, oh, let me remember this in my home life. Don't let me make my husband, or wife, my child, my parents, to be offended at Christian things, at Jesus Christ, because I am

so careless. Nothing hurts our Lord so much as the offences of those who come close to Him, nothing hinders people more from becoming His.

Absolve means to set free. Let me pray to-day He will forgive, will set me free from anything in me which hurts others. Is there anything in my life which seems as if it might be a scandal to others?

"O depth of sweet compassion!
O Love Divine and true!
Save Thou the souls that slight Thee,
And know not what they do." Amen.

THOUGHT II.

"That through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins."

Text.—"EVERY ONE THAT COMMITTETH SIN IS THE BOND-SERVANT OF SIN."

"IF THEREFORE THE SON SHALL MAKE YOU FREE, YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED" (S. John viii. 34, 36).

The thought for to-day is being set free. One may think of the great gift of forgiveness as *cleansing*, and as setting us free from debts we owe to God. And also as of freeing us from the sins themselves. Do I understand this freedom?

Sins are just like chains. Bad habits, as it were, tie one by hard ropes which we can't break. And to get out of these habits, away from these sins, is to be free. Perhaps I often feel how strict and dull it is to keep a lot of rules, to be always watching. Yes, it is at first. So, as I have seen before, it is hard and tiresome to learn to play the piano or the violin: how *many* rules there are to remember!

But when these are learned, how freely the hands and fingers move. So is it with the Christian life

When God in His mercy sets us free we *are* free.

Do I not see how the person who gives in to drink becomes a slave to drink? So it is with all other sins. Am I a slave to any sin? Is it laziness, so that I can't get up early; is it a bad temper, is it a habit of idle gossip, is it a sharp nagging tongue?

The sort of things which do give occasions to my neighbours to stumble. Or is there any worse tyrant? Is there the habit of yielding to wrong desires, to impurity, or drink, or dishonesty? God will set me free if I pray. Pray every day, and often through the day. Pray when temptations come. He will wash me again and again, and by degrees, after sharp, painful struggles, I shall find these old sins cease to tempt me so much. Perhaps in God's own time they will lose all charm. But it takes a long, long time to get free from the chains of sin. Is it not sad to think how these chains have been tied by ourselves often? I can tie a chain right round me of some bad habit.

And so it is so blessed to try to form not chains of sin but habits of goodness, which help by God's grace to make up the character Christ would form in me.

"So vile I am, how dare I hope to stand
In the pure glory of that holy land?
Before the whiteness of that Throne appear?
Yet there are Hands stretched out to draw me near."

(252.)

THOUGHT III.

"That through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed."

Text.—"AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS" (S. Luke xi. 4).

I have seen that habits of sin are just like chains, and

that God will set us free if we pray and try, and go on *trying* and praying.

Perhaps I might, for my last thought on this Collect, think of sin as a *debt*.

The Lord once told His disciples a story of a man who owed his Lord ten thousand talents, and how his Lord forgave him the debt.

Well, I, every person, owes God his whole life; and sin heaps upon us a load of, as it were, debts. That is one way of looking at our sins.

Sin is a disease or sickness of the soul.[1]

Sin is also an offence against others.

Sin is also not giving God what is His due.

We know that if a man hurts another man, or takes what is another's, that man is obliged to, as it were, "make up" by being punished.

And so sin makes us owe a great debt to God, which we can never pay. And our sins are a load of debt. Then God is so merciful; He, like the Lord in the parable, freely forgives.

Yes, forgives *all* the past.

I may look back and see how much I have done which is wrong. I have not given God what I owe to Him, yet, if I will, *He* will forgive and set me free.

And that is why no one need be miserable about his past life, if only he is turned to God; *penitent* he must be, but never in despair. God will set him free from the load of sin.

Only I must feel my sins *are* a load. Do I feel this? Do I want to be set free? Have I any sin done long ago which rises up and makes me unhappy? Is it a debt? Is there anything which I owe to any one? Am I unwilling

[1] *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*, p. 67.

to forgive some one? Have I a grudge against some one? Have I done any wrong to any one?

If so, here is a debt I must pay. If (as the Lord taught us in that story of the Servant who was forgiven a huge debt, and yet would not forgive a fellow-servant a small debt) I won't forgive, I shall not be forgiven. If I am hard on other people, God will not forgive me.

But one more thought. I may have hurt or annoyed some one who is dead, or at any rate to whom I cannot make up my wrong. All I can do is to pray for forgiveness, and take anything that comes on me which is hard to bear as a merciful punishment from God.

"With my burden I begin,
Lord, remove this load of sin,
Let Thy Blood for sinners spilt
Set my conscience free from guilt." (527.)

Thought IV.

"Which by our frailty we have committed."

Text.—"Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. xvii. 5).

One more thought—frailty. I thought of the frailty of man some time ago.

And this frailty, this weakness, is in a great measure why we Christians fall into sin so often. Once we have turned to God, or if we are so blessed as to have had our wills always turned to Him, we do want to serve Him. And we have fresh turnings to Him all through our lives. And very often after one of these fresh beginnings one feels as if one must not fall again, one *cannot*.

Ah, but we do. Why? Because our nature is frail. Surely I know this. How often I make a resolve. I will

get up in time for Prayers, for Early Communion. How often I break it. Why? Because my *will* to do right is *so* weak. So it is with every fall into sin. Christians *do* mean to keep their temper or to be pure, or to avoid drink, and yet they fall into quite grievous sins.

Now, it is a great thing to find out when I am weak. If I am ill and go to a doctor he will sound me to see where my weak point is, if it is my lungs or heart. Do I ever try to see where my weak point is? Is it having too good an opinion of myself, or is it jealousy, or is it a love for idle gossip, or for dress, or for getting money by gambling, or what is it? If I can find it out I can pray especially to be made strong, so that that particular weakness may not, as it were, make a strong bad habit to drag me down.

Let me think once more over this whole Prayer.

God will set me free from the slavery of bad habits.

He will day by day make me stronger.

His Goodness is so bountiful, that is, without measure.

Let me kneel down and ask Him to set me free from bad habits; if I know of one such habit, let me pray at once. Sooner or later He will teach me that His service is freedom, and will keep me from giving occasion to any one to stumble.

"The while I fain would tread the heavenly way,
Evil is ever with me day by day;
Yet on mine ears the gracious tidings fall,
'Repent, confess, thou shalt be loosed from all'." (252.)

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

The Collect.

Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the Wills of Thy faithful people; that they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thought I.

"Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the Wills of Thy faithful people."

Text.—"Gather up the Broken Pieces which remain over" (S. John vi. 12).

To-day I have reached the last Sunday of the Christian Year. That is, of the round of Sundays and Holy Days which begin on Advent Sunday and end this week. Have these Sundays meant anything to me? Did Advent remind me of Death, of Judgment? Did Christmas make me think of the Elder Brother's Love, "Who came down to earth from Heaven" to save me? Did Epiphany make me long to bring Him Gifts of Love, and Penitence, and Worship? Did Lent make me long to be sorry for my sins? Did Holy Week and Good Friday bring me to the Cross? Did Easter and Ascension make me long to rise from sin, to have my heart lifted up to where He is now? Did Whit Sunday make me take home to myself that I—yes, I—have the Gift of the Blessed Spirit? Did Trinity make me know what it is to believe in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost? And all these weeks since, what have I learned?

Ah, has not the Gospel of this week a great message for me: "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost"? Yes, let me gather up my broken bits of time, and see what I have done.

How have I used these Sundays? If I had tried to follow out each week's teaching, should I not be far nearer God?

Have I used them at all? Have these blessed times been anything to me? Or have Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Whitsuntide, only meant chances for fun, holidays—perhaps (oh, please God, not that) opportunities for sin. If this is so, let me turn to God and pray to Him to give me grace to turn to Him, to gather up my broken life, my last years, and bring all my life to Him.

But if it is not so with me. If by God's Mercy I have used these past Sundays a little. If Christmas and Easter have meant real joy, and Good Friday a little, ever so little, real sorrow, then let me thank God to-day. Thank Him for all these past days, for all the teaching of these Sundays. Then let me pray to Him that He will grant me to begin afresh with Advent, to try to use that Holy Season. I can say an extra prayer. The Collect for Advent Sunday would be very good. I can read, perhaps, a book about Advent.[1] I can try to prepare for my Christmas Communion very, very carefully. Perhaps on Sundays I might read that wonderful twenty-fifth chapter of S. Matthew, and try to think of that Great Day when we shall stand before Him. Each year should make me take home to myself how short our lives are, how very long Eternity will be.

"'Tis but a little while
And He shall come again,
Who died that we might live, Who lives
That we with Him may reign:
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that glad day;
O wash me in Thy precious Blood,
And take my sins away." Amen. (288.)

1 *Short Readings for Advent*, published by the S.P.C.K., are good and cheap.

Thought II.

"Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the Wills of Thy faithful people."

Text.—"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13).

This prayer for this last Sunday of the Church's Year is meant for real Christians, really converted people. It means that we pray God to make us wish more to please Him.

For, after all, what does conversion mean?

Simply turning to God. So one can, as it were, renew one's own turning to God—make, as it were, new beginnings.

Sometimes when a real Christian grows very *slack*, it is not "How much can I do for God?" but "How much *must* I do?"

And sometimes real Christians, through God's mercy, find out that they want to do more. He stirs up their wills, not because they have been slack, but *because* they have been eager to please Him.

Have I grown at all slack since, it may be, my First Communion, or my first real turning to God, or perhaps since a friend went away, or a new friend came? What is getting slack? I suppose, getting lazy about Prayer, and Church, and Communion, and less strict about one's temper, or modesty, or truthfulness?

But do I feel that God is helping me, that He is training me to be careful *not* to get slack?

Then, oh, so joyfully, I may pray "Stir up my will".

Stir up my will, dear Lord, to see if I could *not* do something else. Could not I do something for Him I haven't done? Could I do a bit of kindness for some one? Is there a home duty left undone? Could I say another prayer for some one? Or, could I care for some bit of the Lord's Great Mission Field, for the souls He longs to feed as He longed to feed the people of whom we read in this week's Gospel?

Ah, the Lord sometimes stirs up the Wills of His Servants to offer themselves. It might be He would call me. But —another way—He might call me to give up some one I loved.

Sometimes one has to do without a Priest who has hitherto helped one, because God has stirred his will. Then the people whom that Priest has fed for Christ's Sake should be glad to join in giving up for Jesus' Sake their own will, and not grumble and say "There was lots to do here".

But in some way God will stir my will if I pray. Let me seize this opportunity of beginning again. Let me pray to Him to make me *want* to serve Him, even if I feel my will is quite cold.

"Onward then to glory move;
More than conquerors ye shall prove;
Though opposed by many a foe,
Christian soldiers onward go." (291.)

Thought III.

"That they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works."

Text.—"The Harvest is the end of the World, and the Reapers are the Angels" (S. Matt. xiii. 39).

Perhaps I may sometimes have been in a Church where

a Harvest Festival was going on. And it is very beautiful to thank God for His Gifts of food and of life.

Well, this should make me think of another harvest. Our Lord tells us of seed sown, and then growing, bearing fruit and being gathered into barns. And I know how He explained that simple story to His disciples. Do I think of Christians being obliged, if they are Christians, if Jesus is in them and they in Him, to bring forth *fruit?*

Fruits are the only signs by which it is known who are Christ's.

Not that the fruits come to perfection in this life—the corn gets riper and riper. But at the end—how will God judge us? Us—whom He has gathered into His Church; us—whom He has wakened by His grace and cleansed? By our fruits. By what we are.

Now, fruit and corn take a long, long time to get ripe. So I must not be in a hurry with myself or with others—especially with little children. Our Lord tells us in another parable how quietly the seed grows. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The only thing is—Am I growing? I think I ought to know. Surely I can look back and see if I am any gentler or more careful about truth and purity, if I pray, if I am more careful about Holy Communion. It is so beautiful to think of this. There is a lovely Psalm, the very first Psalm of all, which says that those who fear the Lord shall be like trees planted by the water-side—"that will bring forth his fruit in due season". How lovely that is. What thoughts of Peace! The water of God's grace—the garden of the Lord. If ever I have anything to do with little children, do let me try to think of them in this way. As God's young tender trees, planted by Him, to bring forth the lovely flowers of obedience and love for parents and reverence for Holy Things, and

then, by-and-by, the fruits of a good life. To be gathered in by the Holy Angels at the awful Judgment Day.

"One day the Heavenly Sower
Shall reap where He hath sown,
And come again rejoicing,
And with Him bring His own;
And then the fan of judgment
Shall winnow from His floor
The chaff into the furnace
That flameth evermore.
O holy, awful Reaper,
Have mercy in the day
Thou puttest in Thy sickle,
And cast us not away." Amen. (386.)

Thought IV.

"That they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works."

Text.—"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit" (S. John xv. 8).

I must not let the thoughts of the beauty of being planted in God's Own Garden, or of our being like seed sown by the Great Sower, take me away from my own daily life. It is *I* in my own hard or humdrum or suffering life whom God expects to bring forth fruit, yes, and *much fruit*. God asks us for all. But much fruit does not mean getting to be rich or much thought of, or to get a better position. These may come, or they may not. But "much fruit"? That means much love, much joy, and so on—all those fruits which I have thought of several times since Trinity Sunday.

And therefore I can never, never stand still, never be contented with myself.

Do I want to bear more fruit? If I don't, I ought to feel my heart is not right with God. But if I can say truthfully, "I don't *feel* as if I wanted to be any better; yet, O God, make me want," He will hear me.

More fruit. Is there any fruit yet at all? God is so patient, He will bear with me. I may be just like a dry bit of stick, without a sign of growth, yet God is watching over me, watching me with His grace, just as a gardener does when he buys a cutting of a valuable plant.

There is a promise that "they who are planted in the House of the Lord shall bring forth more fruit in their age" (Ps. xcii. 13).

Planted—grafted in, as I was taught some time ago. More fruit as age comes on. Is that not another beautiful thought? Age must not be frightening if only I am prepared for it. God will help me to bring forth fruits of Love and Joy and Peace. In old age Christians often come to a very peaceful time, a Land of Rest, as it is described in a beautiful book called *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

But no one can have this peace without much fighting with sin, much Prayer, much, it may be, of sorrow. Am I growing? Have I any right to think that if God spares me I shall have peace in my heart—His Peace when I am old? Only if I am turned to Him now.

"We bear the burden of the day,
And often toil seems dreary;
But labour ends with sunset ray,
And rest comes for the weary;
May we, the Angel-reaping o'er,
Stand at the last accepted,
Christ's golden sheaves for evermore
To garners bright elected." (384.)

Thought V.

"May of Thee be plenteously rewarded."

Texts.—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (S. Matt. xxv. 23).

"And they shall see His Face" (Rev. xxii. 4).

How strange it is for me if I know anything of my own sins to read of "rewards," of God giving us, as it were, a *prize*.

It seems so wonderful He should forgive *me*, receive *me*, and He actually speaks of prizes, rewards, of a kingdom prepared for us. How can this be?

Because of our dear Lord. We are in Him, His Body; and God looks on us as parts of Jesus, Who deserves everything.

Just for a minute or two for this last bit of thought over this last Collect let me think of—Heaven.

Oh, I am very sinful, very tired often, perhaps very sad, very full of suffering. But—think, oh, my soul, of what He promises. Think of the wonderful Love of God Who first forgives and then rewards.

Isn't it worth while to try to be good, *not* for the sake of what we are to get, but because we must love Him Who loves us so much?

Sometimes, please God, when I am sad, or sick, or hear bad talk, I will lift up my heart to where He is.

After all, it is not for always this "night of our weeping". The morning will break, we shall see Him, see our Lord. And do not let me ever be puzzled by any talk about Christians being selfish because they expect a reward. "A Reward"—a prize. Yes, and what prize? God—the Vision of Almighty God. Can it be selfish to want to see our Father, to see the Lord Jesus, to adore the Holy Ghost?

Ah, it is not selfish. We shall want only God's Will when we get to Heaven ; if we ever get there His Will will be our Peace, as a great Poet says.

And one more thought. If we will, God will give us, give me, some sort of beginning of our "great reward". It is so wonderful, but even here I may grow to have the joy of Heaven. Not yet perhaps, not for a long time, but if only I will pray and try, and try and pray, He will give me my reward, that is, Himself.

"Where Thou leadest I would go,
Walking in Thy steps below,
Till before my Father's Throne
I shall know as I am known." (334.)

Conclusion.

Now we have come to the end of our thoughts. For the few Meditations which are at the end of the book are meant for the special Saints' Days, and will perhaps help to bring home to us the lessons we may learn from these Saints.

Please God, these thoughts may help some of us to pray more about the everyday duties and troubles and temptations of our lives. For there is no life worth living except the Life of a Christian, and there is no one who reads these thoughts who *cannot* be a Christian.

THOUGHTS FOR S. BARNABAS' DAY.—JUNE 11.

THE COLLECT.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who didst endow thy holy Apostle Barnabas with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost; leave us not, we beseech Thee, destitute of Thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them always to thy honour and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"BARNABAS, WHICH IS, BEING INTERPRETED, SON OF EXHORTATION" (CONSOLATION) (Acts iv. 36).

S. Barnabas' Day always falls near Whitsuntide, and makes us think of the Gifts which came to the Church on the first Whitsunday.

S. Barnabas was a Jew, rich with lands and possessions, who poured his money out at the Apostles' feet, and was afterwards, together with S. Paul, numbered among the Apostles. He is a type of those who strengthen and console and cheer.

He it was who assured the Church at Jerusalem that S. Paul was no longer Saul the persecutor; he it was who restored Mark, after the latter had turned back from the perils of the first missionary journey. It is said that he died a martyr's death in his own island of Cyprus. There is something peculiarly gracious, winning, royal-hearted, about this saint.

There is a lovely poem for S. Barnabas' Day in a book called *The Christian Year*, which compares the world to a room of sickness, in which Christians are to move about as Sons and Daughters of Consolation. Comfort. As I shall see in the thought for the third Sunday after Trinity,

Comforting means much more than pity, it means strengthening—encouraging. Do I take home to myself that if I am turned to God, if He has comforted, strengthened, consoled me, I must in my turn strengthen others?

It is a beautiful thought to take with one, if one is called out to minister to the sick, how a nurse may indeed be a true daughter of consolation to the bodies and souls of the sick on whom she waits. Let me remember this, if ever I am called on to do things for a sick person which, if I am not a nurse by profession, may seem difficult and disagreeable. It is very beautiful also to think of a Guild there is for Nurses called the Guild of S. Barnabas. "There seemed a peculiar fitness in thus connecting the Guild with the name of the Son of Consolation. What name could more fitly express the ideal of the Christian Nurse, or more helpfully remind her of the sacred obligations of her calling?"[1]

Thinking of nursing in this way will help me if I am ever called to take it up either as a Profession or because some one near me needs my services.

But a Christian is called to minister to people's souls. If I am a real Christian, by-and-by I must, if I am asked, be ready to help people. People will come to real Christians at times for help, for advice, for strength in times of trouble. How sad it would be to fail to do what God wants one to do then—not to be able to say or do what was wanted to help. Not to be a son or daughter of Consolation. To-day's Collect puts the right prayer on one's lips: "Leave us not destitute of Thy manifold Gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway".

It is only God the Holy Ghost Who can give such gifts as this. Gifts of sympathy and right judgment and power to help others. And to use them rightly means a long course of prayer, of Communion, of fighting against sin, of

[1] From a Short Notice of the Origin and Aims of the Nurses' Guild of S. Barnabas.

silent service. But think, O my soul, of the joy of being allowed to strengthen others; think of God's wonderful goodness in allowing weak, sinful Christians to do a little bit of His work. I must not expect these gifts all at once, but if I *want* to be able to help others, slowly but surely God will give me opportunities. Even to-day I may find a bit of work — an opportunity of helping some one and beginning the life of a child of Consolation.

"O Son of God, our Captain of Salvation,
Thyself by suffering schooled to human grief,
We bless Thee for Thy Sons of Consolation,
Who follow in the steps of Thee their Chief;

"Those whom Thy Spirit's dread vocation severs
To lead the vanguard of Thy conquering host;
Whose toilsome years are spent in brave endeavours,
To bear Thy saving Name from coast to coast;

"Those whose bright faith makes feeble hearts grow stronger,
And sends fresh warriors to the great campaign,
Bids the lone convert feel estranged no longer,
And wins the sundered to be one again;

"And all true helpers, patient, kind, and skilful,
Who shed Thy light across our darkened earth,
Counsel the doubting, and restrain the wilful,
Soothe the sick bed, and share the children's mirth.

"Such was Thy Levite, strong in self-oblation
To cast his all at Thine Apostles' feet;
He whose new name, through every Christian nation,
From age to age our thankful strains repeat.

"Thus, Lord, Thy Barnabas in memory keeping,
Still be Thy Church's watchword, "Comfort ye";
Till in our Father's house shall end our weeping,
And all our wants be satisfied in Thee." Amen. (413.)

THOUGHTS FOR S. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.
JUNE 24.

THE COLLECT.

ALMIGHTY GOD, by whose Providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son, our Saviour, by preaching of repentance; make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"THOU SHALT GO BEFORE THE FACE OF THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS" (S. Luke i. 76). (From the Gospel for the day.)

I have read the wonderful story of S. John the Baptist—of his birth, his mission, his preaching, his death.

He says of himself he was a Voice calling to men to get ready for Jesus Christ. And also that he was not that Light—Jesus Christ—but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

What lesson can I take from his life to-day?

What can I learn from the Prayer?

First of all, the Collect dwells on the Thought I have had so often brought before me, that it was through God's providence, God's care beforehand, that John the Baptist was born in a wonderful way, and sent on this wonderful mission. More and more as I read and study my Bible, and the lives of God's Saints, I shall see how God's care is over all men, but that also He

gives His Servants special work and special suffering for Him.

John the Baptist is the type of those who are called out by God to give up home life and home joys, and lead a lonely life.

Now I ought to know this. It is so sad to hear people who are Communicants, who have been taught, speak as if life in the home, in quiet places, in comfort and ease, was the only life to which God calls His Servants.

I must learn to look on those who give up home, and the hope of wife and children, for the Sake of preaching the Gospel of Christ, as people to be honoured, not wondered at, or perhaps jeered at. Then, is S. John the Baptist at all an example for me in my life?

Yes—every Christian is called to witness by his or her life for Jesus Christ.

First of all, the Collect prays that we may truly repent. Ah, yes. *Repentance* is the great work of our life.

There must be, as I have seen before, the *turning* of my Will to God and the constant giving up of sin, fresh beginnings.

But a Christian must be growing—from our repentance we have to rise to strength and courage.

These things are spoken of in this Collect:—

1. Constantly speak the truth. How hard this is. We find temptations to be untrue everywhere. In business or in trade how hard it is to be *quite* true, to sell things for what they really are, to be true in bargains.

Then, again, how hard it is to give a true account of anything we have seen or heard. We tell a little bit of the truth, not all; we make things greater or smaller to suit ourselves. We keep back the truth.

Again, fear of others makes it hard to speak the truth. We are afraid to own we have been to Church, to Communion, for fear of being laughed at.

Or vanity. We don't like to speak the truth about our age, or our relations, or our work. We try to make out to be richer, grander people than we are. All these are ways of not speaking the truth.

The only way to be true is to have the Sun of God's Presence always with us, to pray to Him, to set a watch before our mouth and keep the door of our lips—and to frankly confess our fault when we have deceived another.

But there is another point:—

"Boldly rebuke vice".

Now it is not often that I am called upon to find fault with my neighbours and companions. Even if I am called to the care of children, I must take care of over-much fault-finding, of *nagging*.

But boldly rebuking vice is another matter. It means a bold yet modest declaration that wrong is wrong. Nothing is more impressive than the indignation of a really good and usually gentle person. There is a very awful text in the Revelation of S. John which speaks of the "wrath of the Lamb". Yes, there is righteous wrath. If one ever comes face to face with drunkenness, with cruelty, with wicked lusts, one must speak out. Nothing is more sinful, nothing is more foolish, than to talk of drunkenness as if it were funny, or if evil living, of what we specially call *Sin*, were only a sort of weakness, a slip which didn't matter at all in a man and only mattered in a woman if it was found out.

A Christian must stand up boldly and say these things are wrong, are dangerous to soul and body.

Patiently suffer for the Truth's Sake.

Yes, S. John the Baptist did find rebuking sin led him to suffering, to death. Perhaps I may not ever come into any real danger from boldly rebuking vice, but even that is not certain, and at any rate I must be "bold for Jesus' Sake". Suffering there must be sooner or later. There may be

laughter, or persecution, or even worldly loss. I may have to lose something because I will not cheat. I may find if I am faithful to my employers that I must give up certain things which brought me profit. Or if I have business of my own, I may have to lose money because I will not underpay those who work for me, or cheat, or lie. All sorts of suffering come upon Christians who are real Christians.

Yes, but—the end—the joy of bearing something for Christ makes it all worth while. For, after all, I must ever remember that which our Lord said: "That the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist".

Why? Because all Christians are joined to Christ. We are never alone. If we suffer, Christ is in us. Christ bears our sorrows *in* us as He bore them *for* us.

To-day, then, let me pray God to make me brave.

"Lo! from the desert homes,
Where he hath hid so long,
The new Elias comes,
In sternest wisdom strong;
The voice that cries
Of Christ from high,
And judgment nigh
From opening skies.

"Your God e'en now doth stand
At Heaven's opening door;
His fan is in His hand,
And He will purge His floor;
The wheat He claims
And with Him stows,
The chaff He throws
To quenchless flames.

"Ye haughty mountains, bow
Your sky-aspiring heads;
Ye valleys, hiding low,
Lift up your gentle meads;
Make His way plain,
Your King before,
For evermore
He comes to reign.

"May Thy dread voice around,
Thou harbinger of Light,
On our dull ears still sound,
Lest here we sleep in night,
Till judgment come,
And on our path
Shall burst the wrath
And deathless doom.

"O God, with love's sweet might,
Who dost anoint and arm
Christ's soldier for the fight
With grace that shields from harm,
Thrice Blessed Three,
Heaven's endless days
Shall sing Thy praise
Eternally." Amen. (414.)

THOUGHTS FOR S. PETER'S DAY.—JUNE 29.

THE COLLECT.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who by Thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to Thy Apostle S. Peter many excellent gifts, and commandest Him earnestly to feed Thy flock; make, we beseech Thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach Thy holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, FEED MY SHEEP" (S. John xxi. 17).

There are many, many lessons to learn from S. Peter. The great lesson of a true Repentance, rising from a bad fall to heights of courage, of love; the lesson of a true faith—"Thou art the Christ"; of the wonderful deliverance from prison which is described to us in to-day's Epistle.

Let me think of what to-day's Collect speaks. Our Lord's Command to feed the flock.

I remember that lovely story—so calm, so peaceful; the Risen Lord standing on the shore of the Lake, and the disciples awestruck, yet joyful, coming in from their night's toil with the unbroken net just filled full, and the plunge of the eager, warm-hearted S. Peter into the lake, and the wonderful Sacramental meal—and then that threefold question and threefold command: "Lovest thou Me? Feed My lambs, tend My sheep, feed My sheep." There are echoes of all this in S. Peter's own epistles. In the tenderness, the love for Christ, the love for souls, which these epistles show. Think of his joy—humbling, penitent joy—at not only being forgiven, but sent to feed, to care for, to feed Christ's little ones.

Let me think of this a little. All clergy are to feed

Christ's flock. That is why one of the names for a clergyman is *Pastor*. One who is a Shepherd of Souls. Do I realise this? That it is God's Will I should be nourished with heavenly food by the hands of His Pastors.

Surely this is a great Office. Shall I not pray more for them who are called to it. If people would only pray more for the Clergy, the Clergy would be better Pastors, men like the Shepherd of shepherds, Jesus Christ.

Again, all Christians are Priests; not all are called to the Office of representing Christ's flock, but all are called to service, all who are in any way set over others share the office of a Shepherd.

For instance, those who have the care of children, Fathers, Mothers, Nurses, Teachers—I may be one of these at some time or other. There is hardly any man or woman who at some time or other is not called on to do something for the little ones. Our Lord in this most solemn moment thought of His Lambs. Can I dare to neglect the feeding of His Lambs if at all I am called to do anything for them? Possibly a Sunday Class, possibly little brothers and sisters, possibly the work of a teacher, a nurse, a parent—all these feed Christ's Lambs. It is, I suppose, teaching the little ones their prayers, teaching them about our Lord, about God's Love, teaching them also their own duties, obedience, modesty, gentleness. If God would put this sense of the *pastoral* office into the hearts of every Father or Mother, every Nurse and Teacher, how much would not be done for Christ's Lambs, how much easier would not the work of the Chief Pastors become? I can at least pray that this grace may be given to all who have to do with little children. That our Lord's most tender command may be obeyed.

"O bless the shepherd; bless the sheep;
That guide and guided both be one,
One in the faithful watch they keep,
Until this hurrying life be done." (353.)

THOUGHTS FOR S. JAMES' DAY.—JULY 25.

THE COLLECT.

GRANT, O merciful God, that as Thine Holy Apostle, Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, and without delay was obedient unto the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow Thy holy commandments; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"YE SHALL DRINK INDEED OF MY CUP, AND BE BAPTISED WITH THE BAPTISM THAT I AM BAPTISED WITH" (S. Matt. xx. 23). (From the Gospel of the day.)

S. James was one of that little band of Three whom our Blessed Lord brought closest to Him. He was S. John's brother, one of the Sons of Thunder, one of the fishers who heard the call and left all they had, one of those who were on the wonderful Mount and saw the Lord in glory, and he it was for whom with S. John, as we are told in to-day's Gospel, their mother made the urgent request that her sons might sit beside our Lord in His Kingdom, and the two sons boldly, with all the ardour of a fresh conversion, declared themselves ready to drink the Lord's Cup, to be baptised with His Baptism.

And S. James was the first of the Apostles to die, as the portion from the Acts which is to-day's Epistle tells us. He was slain by Herod—beheaded.

What can I learn from S. James' life? There are many lessons. Let me think of one or two.

When one first knows something of the joy of Conversion,

of Love for Christ, one is often very eager to *get on*. To do something great. Do I know anything of this feeling? Or do I, if I see someone else eager, bold, joyful, smile at that ardent soul, and throw cold water on the bright spirit, the glowing hopes, the high courage? Our Lord was not like that. He did not check the Apostles and tell them their high thoughts were foolish; He raised them from thoughts of themselves to the knowledge of what being with Him *meant*. "He that is near Me is near the Fire." And those who wish to follow Christ must be prepared to face pain, suffering, disappointment. So it was with S. James. He had only a short time to work, to preach, to follow the Lord's Will in Life. The end came, the Cup of suffering, the Baptism of Blood.

So all who long to be Christ's must be prepared to find that He gives them suffering. Another lesson we are so apt to forget is that a life cut short is *not* a failure.

If I hear of someone who has been taken away by sharp and sudden death, perhaps in the midst of work, work perhaps in Central Africa, perhaps in crowded London streets, I must not think the life is wasted. God means many of His soldiers to be ready to face death, and suffering, and disappointment, and hard work. But for some He has prepared a sharp trial, and then—Rest.

And most of all, is not the lesson from to-day's Gospel this: We must not seek great things for ourselves, even in Religion? To do what lies nearest to us, to do our best in our homes, in our work—the duty which is perhaps very commonplace, and which will never bring any particular praise, is what He wishes. He may, He probably will, say "Come up higher," but we must never wish for anything because it will make us known of men. No one may *seek* a martyr's crown, may rush into danger, may recklessly throw life away for want of care. All may be called to

share in a portion of a Martyr's sufferings, even to die a Martyr's death, but these and all trials are in God's Hand. Perhaps all this seems dreamy and unpractical. Yet surely sometimes it does seem to people who are trying to serve God that if only they could do some great thing, some heroic deed, if they could be Gordons, or Florence Nightingales, or great Preachers, it would be easier than the common weary round of daily life. Such a temper *as this* is what our Lord rebukes.

" Sit down and take thy fill of joy
At God's right hand a bidden guest;
Drink of the cup that cannot cloy,
Eat of the bread that cannot waste.
O great Apostle! rightly now
Thou readest all thy Saviour meant
What time His grave yet gentle brow
In sweet reproof on thee was bent.

" ' Seek ye to sit enthroned by Me?
Alas! ye know not what ye ask:
The first in shame and agony,
The lowest in the meanest task—
This can ye be? and can ye drink
The cup that I in tears must steep,
Nor from the 'whelming waters shrink
That o'er Me roll so dark and deep?'

" ' We can—Thine are we, dearest Lord,
In glory and in agony,
To do and suffer all Thy word:
Only be Thou for ever nigh.'
' Then be it so—My cup receive,
And of My woes baptismal taste;
But for the crown, that angels weave
For those next Me in glory placed,

"'I give it not by partial love;
But in My Father's book are writ
What names on earth shall lowliest prove
That they in Heaven may highest sit.'
Take up the lesson, O my heart;
Thou, Lord of meekness, write it there,
Thine own meek self to me impart,
Thy lofty hope, Thy lowly prayer.

"If ever on the Mount with Thee
I seem to soar in vision bright,
With thoughts of coming agony,
Stay Thou the too presumptuous flight:
Gently along the vale of tears
Lead me from Tabor's sunbright steep,
Let me not grudge a few short years
With Thee toward Heaven to walk and weep:

"Too happy, on my silent path,
If now and then allowed with Thee,
Watching some placid holy death,
The secret work of love to see;
But, oh! most happy, should Thy call—
Thy welcome call at last be given—
'Come where thou long hast stored thy all,
Come see thy place prepared in Heaven'."

—*Christian Year*, Poem for S. James' Day.

THOUGHTS FOR S. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.

August 24.

The Collect.

O Almighty and Everlasting God, Who didst give to Thine Apostle, S. Bartholomew, grace truly to believe and to preach Thy Word; grant, we beseech Thee, unto Thy Church to love that Word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"By the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people" (Acts v. 12). (From the Epistle for to-day.)

This is an Apostle of whom I know nothing.

He is supposed to be the Israelite called Nathaniel, who was brought to our Lord by S. Philip, and of whom Jesus said "in him is no guile," but this is not certain. There is a story that he preached in India and died a martyr's death.

What is the lesson I am to learn to-day?

1. That God has many nameless Saints, that is, Saints unknown to the world. The Apostles were called to a very great office. They were to begin the kingdom of God in the world; they were to "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel". But beyond their names we know very little of any except S. Peter, S. James, S. John. So now-a-days there are many doing a really great work for God who are unknown to the busy world. It has often been so in things which belong to God's great gifts of Poetry, of Painting, of Music. Often in his lifetime a Poet has been quite unknown, or only known to a few, and after his death people have found out his greatness. And the same thing has happened to Painters and to Musicians. And in the

great kingdom of God the real people who are doing work for God's glory are often unnoticed by their brothers and sisters in the faith, or at any rate thought to be of small consequence.

We shall have great surprises hereafter. We shall find that the people who have advanced the kingdom of God have often been people who have led very busy, hard lives, but who have prayed a great deal, and used opportunities for doing kindnesses, and kept themselves pure. These are the Saints; unknown often to the world. Not always, of course. Others are called by God to conspicuous places. Such men as S. Peter, S. Paul, and many another holy man or woman. But if ever I am tempted to think it hard that I should have to lead a dull life, and that I can never hope to be distinguished or known to many people, I must remember that God knows each of His people, and that to some He gives a seemingly less distinguished place than others.

Again, there was no distinction in the Apostles as to their gifts. S. Peter and S. Bartholomew equally were able to work wonders. On all the Holy Spirit came. And so it is now. A holy Bishop or Pastor may be poor, obscure, little known to the great world, and yet he is as much a Bishop or Pastor as if he were rich, or very learned. Let me remember this. It is not riches, a great house, a train of servants, which make a Bishop. These things are accidents, and are necessary sometimes. But it is the Call of God, the laying on of Apostolic hands, which gives the Office. People forget this sometimes, and treat or speak of, say, a Missionary Bishop, who has spent his time and strength for his Lord in distant lands, as if he were not quite so great a person as Bishops who have more outward pomp and show because of their circumstances. This is to do just what we promised not to do, to "follow the vain pomp and glory of this world".

S. Bartholomew's Day is a great witness of all worldliness, all caring for outward show.

"King of Saints, to Whom the number
Of Thy starry host is known,
Many a name, by man forgotten,
Lives for ever round Thy Throne;
Lights, which earth-born mists have darkened,
There are shining full and clear,
Princes in the court of Heaven,
Nameless, unremembered here

"In the roll of Thine Apostles
One there stands, Bartholomew,
He for whom to-day we offer,
Year by year, our praises due;
How he toiled for Thee and suffered
None on earth can now record;
All his saintly life is hidden
In the knowledge of his Lord.

"Was it he, beneath the fig-tree
Seen of Thee, and guileless found;
He who saw the good he longed for
Rise from Nazareth's barren ground;
He who met his risen Master
On the shore of Galilee;
He to whom the Word was spoken,
'Greater things thou yet shalt see?'

"None can tell us; all is written
In the Lamb's great book of life,
All the faith, and prayer, and patience,
All the toiling, and the strife;
There are told Thy hidden treasures;
Number us, O Lord, with them,
When Thou makest up Thy jewels
Of Thy living diadem." Amen. (419.)

THOUGHTS FOR S. MATTHEW'S DAY.

SEPTEMBER 21.

THE COLLECT.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, Who by Thy Blessed Son didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist; grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same Thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One God, world without end. Amen.

Text.—"AND AS JESUS PASSED BY, HE SAW A MAN, CALLED MATTHEW, SITTING AT THE PLACE OF TOLL: AND HE SAITH UNTO HIM, FOLLOW ME. AND HE AROSE AND FOLLOWED HIM" (S. Matt. ix. 9). (From the Gospel for this day.)

"O Almighty God, Who by Thy Blessed Son didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist."

I know of course who S. Matthew was—a tax gatherer. His home was by the Lake of Galilee, the same lake on which our Lord sailed so often, and probably his work was to collect taxes from fisher boats on that lake. Probably he knew our Lord, and only needed the word "Follow Me" to make him leave all. Leave his money, his gains, to follow Christ, to be one of those "sent" by Christ—Apostles—to tell the story of the Lord's Life and Death and Resurrection.

It was a great Vocation—Calling. Do I think that it was easy for S. Matthew because it was our Lord Himself that called? Ah, it needed courage—it was what we call a

"venture of faith". Our Lord outwardly was much like other people, only probably often very much more worn and tired. His own friends had wanted to take Him home, because they thought He was beside Himself. He was poor, He often had nowhere where He could rest for the night. Yet those who followed Him soon found that He was very wonderful, that He said wonderful things about Himself. Was it worth while to leave one's home and one's safe way of life? They found it was worth while.

"Grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same Thy Son Jesus Christ."

And S. Matthew was brave enough to obey the call. And for us—for me? Still our Lord comes and calls each one. When we hear His Voice specially calling us, it is very likely we have already known about Him. We may not be living in sin at all, only we want now to hear Him call us to come nearer. He calls in different ways. Some go on day by day doing their work better and better, and His Voice seems always to say to them to tell *at home* what the Lord has done. And then sometimes His Voice says "Follow Me," and if we obey it will mean leading a different sort of life. It may be that He will call quite clearly to me to do something for Him. People are called to the Mission Field sometimes. Not only clergymen, but doctors, printers, artisans, and nurses. People are called to do work at home, to teach a class, nurse a sick person, help some one else who wants help. How beautiful it is to listen for these calls. What could make me deaf to Jesus Christ? The Collect tells me:—

Loving money, caring too much for gain.

The caring *only* for money shuts one's heart to Jesus' Love. It is not that I must not care to get proper wages for my work, not that; nor does it mean being careful and

saving. But it *is* putting money first. Being ready to do anything to get a little more money. Being ready, if I have people under me, to make them work hard for very, very little. Being ready to let houses and drains get out of order for the sake of money. Being ready to bet and gamble to get some more money. It means never having anything to give to God's Church. And this love of money will grow and grow and come between my soul and God. There is no one who does not need this prayer, however poor he or she is; no one who may not hear his Lord's Voice.

And one more thought. Jesus Christ called S. Matthew while he was at his work. I need not think Jesus will not notice me in my work. If He wants me to leave it for something different He will make it clear to me. But very likely the call will mean to follow Him more closely in my daily life. Only let me be *ready*. Above all the noise and din of earth let me listen for Jesus. If I try to hear Him I *shall* hear Him.

"There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and rambling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

—*Christian Year*, Poem for S. Matthew's Day.

THOUGHTS FOR S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS' DAY.—SEPTEMBER 29.

THE COLLECT.

O EVERLASTING GOD, Who hast constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order; mercifully grant that as Thy Holy Angels always do Thee service in heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Texts.—"ARE THEY NOT ALL MINISTERING SPIRITS, SENT FORTH TO DO SERVICE FOR THE SAKE OF THEM THAT SHALL INHERIT SALVATION?" (Heb. i. 14).

"TAKE HEED THAT YE DESPISE NOT ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES; FOR I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT IN HEAVEN THEIR ANGELS DO ALWAYS BEHOLD THE FACE OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN" (S. Matt. xviii. 10).

The Holy Angels. To-day we do not praise God for holy men, Apostles or Martyrs, but for those glorious beings of whom we read so much in Holy Scripture, Angels and Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim praise Him for ever and ever.

I know the Archangel Gabriel called the Blessed Virgin and told her of her glorious Vocation. Angels sang the Birth of Jesus. An Angel strengthened Him in His Agony. Angels told the holy women of the Resurrection. Angels stood by at His Ascension, and an Angel told Zacharias of the coming birth of his son. An Angel released S. Peter. Angels constantly appear in the Revelation of S. John.

And, as the text I have read says, they minister to us, the heirs of salvation.

It is a strange and wonderful thought that each person's life is, as it were, a battle to be fought out in the Presence of God and of the Holy Angels.

From the other text taken from to-day's Gospel, and for other reasons, it is often thought that each person has a Guardian Angel who watches over him from his Baptism to his Death. And whether this is so or not, there is no doubt that the Holy Angels care intensely for us. They rejoice when we repent, as our Lord tells us.

Am I weary? Does it seem to me that I cannot go on fighting? Does it ever seem as if evil was too strong? Let me remember that God's unseen armies are around us. If ever I should be brought near evil things, things which seem even to me devilish, unhuman, the ravings of drunkenness, the despair of one tempted to suicide, the cruelty of a wicked person to a child—let me remember God's Good Angels are all around. One cannot really tell how full the universe may be of Angelic presences, and behind them all is—God.

There is a beautiful verse uttered by Daniel, "My God hath sent His Angel and hath shut the lions' mouths". Ah, how often now does not God send His Angel to defend His innocent ones? We see boys and girls protected from hurt in the midst of frightful evil. Maidens who have been kept pure and spotless in terrible dangers. Boys who have resisted horrible temptations. Sometimes one hears of wonderful escapes, and one may read legends, beautiful stories of little children and grown people being saved from danger in strange and wonderful ways. We know so little of the unseen world around us.

Can I make these thoughts practical?

I may realise the great value of my life on earth since the

Blessed Trinity, the Holy Angels, watch how I live my life, play my part. I must not think I can slip along anyhow unnoticed. There is no hiding from the Unseen World. And I can be brave. God and His Good Angels are with me. Angelic ministrations are round me when I die, they will bear me, probably my own Guardian Angel will bear me, into the Presence of my God.

"They come, God's messengers of love,
They come from realms of peace above,
From homes of never-fading light,
From blissful mansions ever bright.

"They come to watch around us here,
To soothe our sorrow, calm our fear:
Ye heavenly guides, speed not away,
God willeth you with us to stay.

"But chiefly at its journey's end
'Tis yours the spirit to befriend,
And whisper to the faithful heart,
'O Christian soul, in peace depart'.

"Blest Jesu, Thou Whose groans and tears
Have sanctified frail nature's fears,
To earth in bitter sorrow weighed
Thou didst not scorn Thine Angel's aid;

"An Angel guard to us supply,
When on the bed of death we lie;
And by Thine own Almighty power
O shield us in the last dread hour.

"To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
From all above and all below
Let joyful praise unceasing flow." Amen. (424.)

THOUGHTS FOR S. LUKE'S DAY.—October 18.

The Collect.

Almighty God, Who calledst Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospels, to be an Evangelist and Physician of the soul; may it please Thee that, by the wholesome medicine of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed; through the merits of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"Luke, the beloved Physician" (Col. iv. 14).

About S. Luke not much is told us in the New Testament, but I know from what I have learned that he was the author of the Gospel which bears his name and of the Acts of the Apostles, and that he was a dear friend and companion of S. Paul, and that he was a doctor. There is also a story that he was a Painter.

S. Luke's Gospel is the Gospel of healing, of repentance, of love. It is the Gospel of the Holy Childhood. It is the Gospel which contains the lovely hymns which we sing at Evensong. It is the Gospel which treasures for us the Parables of Mercy, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Silver, the Prodigal Son. It is the Gospel which sets before us the intense Love of our Lord—His prayer for those who were nailing Him to the Cross.

Shall I not to-day thank God for that wonderful Gospel of S. Luke, and for that other Book, the Acts? If I can ever study it with the help of some wise person, or go to Lectures on it, I shall find how wonderfully full of teaching that Book is, and how it reflects the Gospel. I shall find

how much the Acts teach us of what the Apostles believed and taught. And to make this practical, S. Luke was a doctor, and therefore the Collect speaks of his written words being "wholesome medicines".

Do I *know* that sin is a sickness of the soul?

Now, please God, I am turned to Him, converted. But do I try to use all the means God gives to cure sin? Now there are many people who have some pet ailment they would rather keep than not. For instance, there are not a few people who would prefer an occasional fit of toothache to the pain of having their tooth taken out.

So it is with many Christians—people who wish to be saved. It would cost so much to part with some particular sin. Just as a person will sometimes refuse to call in a doctor for fear he should cause the sick man to give up something pleasant, or to do something very unpleasant—so people will often shut their ears to the Voice of God in His Word and uttered by His Priests. They will do anything rather than listen to a particular preacher, he makes them uncomfortable. They will steadily set their faces against anything like Confession or real Self-examination.

And, sometimes, a person who has a sickness won't go to the real cause of his illness. He has been ill, and the real cause is over-eating and drinking, but he won't own it. Anything else has been the cause of his sickness, not that.

So it is with the sickness of the soul.

People will, sometimes people who *are* converted, never try to find out what is the matter with their souls. Perhaps a person is always losing his temper. What is the cause? Oh, the people he lives with are so provoking, or he is over-tired. The real cause is he cares too much for his own way. Another person is always taking offence because people are so unkind, so apt to put upon him, when

the real cause is that person thinks far too much about himself or herself.

How can *I* find out the real cause of sin? By God's Holy Word. If I try and rule my life by those rules the Lord Jesus laid down, I shall find out that what I thought "self-respect" was sinful pride, what I thought only a bit of fun was wicked self-indulgence, what I thought was treating people who had vexed me in a fitting manner was hard unforgiveness. No Gospel speaks more of Repentance than S. Luke's. Does repentance mean bitter medicine? It may be at first, but it will turn to sweetness, and I shall be led from it to the Living Bread, to the Lord Who is Himself the Good Physician, Who will heal all my sickness.

"What thanks and praise to Thee we owe,
O Priest and Sacrifice Divine,
For Thy dear Saint through whom we know
So many a gracious Word of Thine;

"Whom Thou didst choose to tell the tale
Of all Thy Manhood's toils and tears,
And for a moment lift the veil
That hides Thy Boyhood's spotless years.

"How many a soul with guilt oppressed
Has learned to hear the joyful sound
In that sweet tale of sin confessed,
The Father's love, the lost and found!

"How many a child of sin and shame
Has refuge found from guilty fears
Through her, who to the Saviour came
With costly ointments and with tears!

"What countless worshippers have sung,
In lowly fane or lofty choir,
The song that loosed the silent tongue
Of him who was the Baptist's sire!

"And still the Church through all her days
Uplifts the strains that never cease,
The Blessed Virgin's hymn of praise,
The aged Simeon's words of peace.

"O happy Saint! whose sacred page,
So rich in words of truth and love,
Pours on the Church from age to age
This healing unction from above;

"The witness of the Saviour's life,
The great Apostle's chosen friend
Through weary years of toil and strife,
And still found faithful to the end.

"So grant us, Lord, like him to live,
Beloved by man, approved by Thee,
Till Thou at last the summons give,
And we, with him, Thy Face shall see." Amen.

(425.)

THOUGHTS FOR S. SIMON AND S. JUDE'S DAY.

October 28.

The Collect.

O Almighty God, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner stone; grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"These things I command you, that ye love one another" (S. John xv. 17). (Part of to-day's Gospel.)

Of S. Simon and S. Jude I know very little. Jude was the brother of James the son of Alpheus, and wrote an epistle which is read to-day, and he is also called by S. Matthew and S. Mark Thaddeus, by S. Luke Judas. He was probably a cousin of the Lord. Simon is sometimes thought to have been his brother.

So again, as on S. Bartholomew's Day, the lesson is—God's Saints are often unknown by the world. Let me think to-day of how our Lord sent out His Apostles in a band, in pairs, in sets of three. He Himself had a very special friend. So He seems to raise and hallow our friendships. Do I know at all what it is to have a friend? Some one who will stand by me in troubles, will joy with me in joy, and who will believe my word, who will not say things against me.

A friend, a real friend, is one of the best gifts God gives. But, for those who are trying to serve God in the midst of a world which is *not* trying to serve Him, what a joy, what comfort to find a friend who is also the servant of Christ.

Think of a young soldier in a regiment, who wants to keep firm and good, to say his prayers, make his Communions, think what it is for him to find a comrade of the same mind. And the same thing applies to people in shops, in large households of servants, and so on.

And sometimes one who has been making a hard fight for God, in a household, or a workshop, or wherever it may be, feels overcome with loneliness; there is no one who cares for good things around him; it may be he is far away from home, and the Church is strange, or he is abroad, and there is no Church. And then all at once he finds out there is some one else who is fighting the same fight, caring for the same things. How cheering, how God-given the comfort. Therefore I think the lesson I may learn to-day is first the need of having good friends. It is a great thing to have the gift of making friends, but those who have it must take care how they use it. When I am attracted by a person who is not yet a friend, I should take care to see whether this new friend will help or hinder my life. ~~I must~~ try to make friends with those who care for being good. It does not follow from this that all our friends must think just as we do, but it is a great thing to have some one friend who is also a friend of Our Lord Jesus Christ. What a help two such friends may be to each other. What happy hours they may share in Communion, in Prayer, in talks about the things of God.

And I must be ready in my turn to cheer the lonely. We are, as the Collect says, to be made a holy temple; we are a great brotherhood. ~~Let me~~ try to look out for lonely Christians; ~~let me~~ try to have an especial love for my fellow

Communicants. Often and often we are told to "Love the brethren," which means the Christian family of God.

"And as of old, by two and two,
His herald Saints the Saviour sent
To soften hearts like morning dew,
Where He to shine in mercy meant;
So evermore He deems His Name
Best honoured and His way prepared,
When watching by His altar-flame
He sees His servants duly paired."

—*Christian Year*, S. Simon and S. Jude.

THOUGHTS FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY.—November 1.

The Collect.

O Almighty God, who hast knit together Thine elect in One Communion and Fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow Thy Blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text.—"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. vii. 9.)

All Saints! This is the last Festival of the Church's year. Does it mean anything to me? Please God, it may come to mean a great deal.

We say to God in this prayer that He has joined His elect in one Communion and Fellowship.

I remember learning in the Catechism, "God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifieth me and all the *elect* people of God". Elect means the people whom God has chosen to serve Him in this world. Every baptised person is one of those chosen; if he answers to his call he will be "numbered with God's Saints in glory". I need never stop to think "Am I one of God's elect—the chosen?" I am indeed; but

do I answer to that call? And then, what is the blessing of being one of these called, these chosen, these elect?

This—that *I*, who perhaps am poor, or unlearned, or ill, or sorrowful, and who am certainly very sinful, *I* am joined with every one of God's Saints. I am one with them. Those in Paradise, the blessed ones, have fought, so must I fight, but they are all with me, because we belong to that Body, that wonderful, glorious mystery, "the great Church of God".

Yes, joined together in Jesus our Lord.

So, shall I not pray the prayer that I, that all of us on earth, may follow in the glorious path? Our Lord leads us, and behind Him along the way that often seems so hard to tread comes the great Army—Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Martyrs. Yes, and many more. Those who have followed Him in daily life, those who have conquered sins, those who have borne trials, troubles, sicknesses. The poor out of crowded cities, the hard-worked, those who are forgotten by the world. And I may be one of these. I may obey His call and be one of His Saints.

God our Father puts before each of us what He wants—not cleverness, not success, not riches, but goodness. We hear in the All Saints' Day Epistle of the great multitude which no man can number, and then our Lord takes up His Word, and in the Gospel tells us so simply, so calmly, what the life of a Saint is. Be poor in spirit, be pure, be meek, and so on. That *is* the life of a Saint. It may be that God will send me happiness. I may have to lead the Saintly life in joy. Sometimes the Saintly life leads to persecution, to death. God knows best. "He has care for His elect." May God make me rise to the thought of this my calling, train me in the Life of Holiness.

"Make me to be numbered with Thy Saints in glory everlasting."

One more thought.

Shall I not praise God for all His Saints? Is it not enough to stir one's heart with joy to think of those who have conquered? Think of the great company looking on, the crowd of witnesses. And I am one with them. O I must be worthy of my great calling! God has called me to nothing less than being one of these. He will help me not to fail.

Let me to-day feel sure of the joy of that fellowship. I may be very lonely, but I have friends *everywhere*, the holy ones on earth, the Saints in Paradise.

Oh, let me praise God for them, for the Apostles and Prophets, and the Blessed Mother. Yes, for them; and also for all holy ones whose special example may have helped me. The good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And let me remember that in the Holy Communion I am joined in a special way to these—all are one in Christ.

"For their Faith, their hope,
their labours, their truth,
their blood, their zeal,
their diligence, their tears,
their purity, their beauty,
Glory to Thee, O Lord, Glory to Thee."[1]

"For all the Saints who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy Name, O Jesu, be for ever blest.
Alleluia.

"Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress, and their Might,
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou in the darkness drear their one true Light.
Alleluia.

[1] Bp. Andrewes.

"O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the Saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia.

"O blest communion! fellowship Divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia." (437.)

THE END.

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